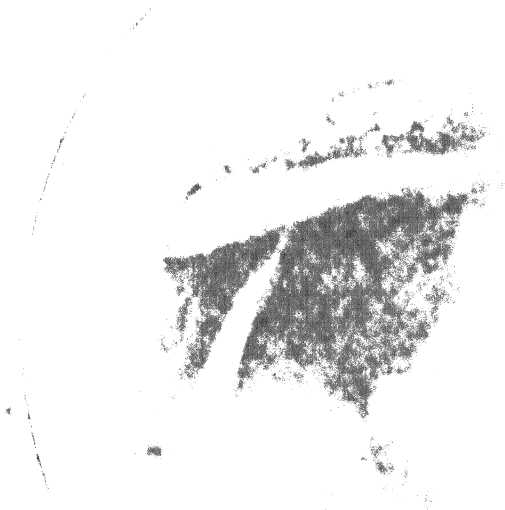
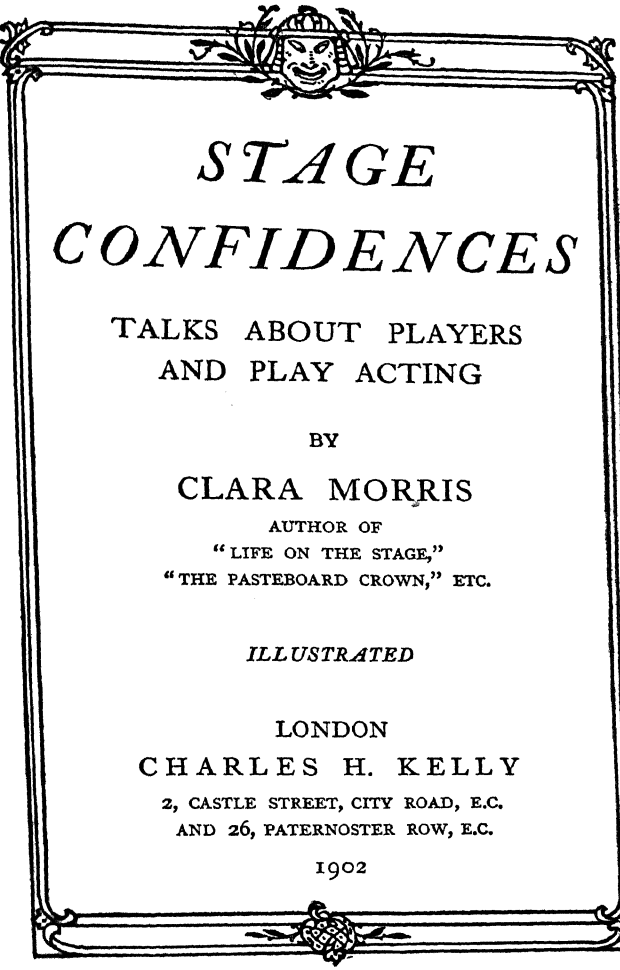




STAGE CONFIDENCES

TALKS ABOUT PLAYERS AND PLAY ACTING

BY

CLARA MORRIS

AUTHOR OF
"LIFE ON THE STAGE,"
"THE PASTEBOARD CROWN," ETC.

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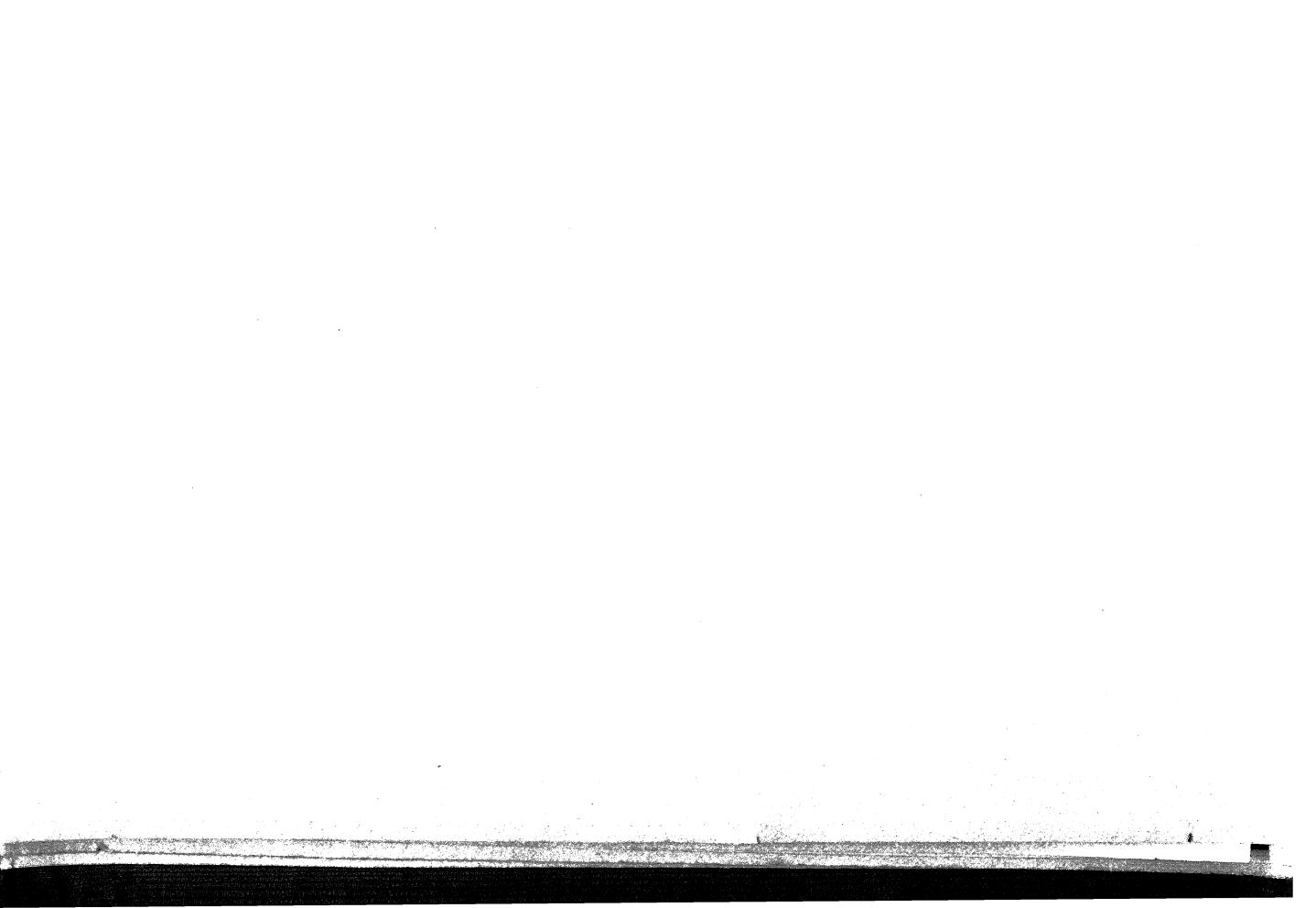
MARY ANDERSON

"THE FAIR

THE CHASTE

THE UNEXPRESSIVE SHE"





GREETING

TO those dear girls who honour me with their liking and their confidences, greetings first, then a statement and a proposition.

Now I have the advantage over you of years, but you have the advantage over me of numbers. You can ask more questions in an hour than I can answer in a week. You can fly into a hundred "tiffs" of angry disappointment with me while I am struggling to utter the soft answer that turneth away the wrath of one.

Now, you eager, impatient young damsels, your name is Legion, and your addresses are scattered freely between the two oceans. Some of you are grave, some gay, some well-off, some very poor, some wise, some very, very foolish,—yet you are all moved by the same desire, you all ask, very nearly, the same questions. No actress can answer all the girls who write to her,—no more can I, and that

disturbs me, because I like girls and I hate to disappoint them.

But now for my proposition. Why not become a lovely composite girl, my friend, Miss Hope Legion, and let me try to speak to her my word of warning, of advice, of remonstrance? If she doubts, let me prove my assertions by incident, and if she grows vexed, let me try to win her to laughter with the absurdities, — that are so funny in their telling, though so painful in their happening.

Clara Morris.

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CHAPTER I

A WORD OF WARNING

EVERY actress of prominence receives letters from young girls and women who wish to go on the stage, and I have my share. These letters are of all kinds. Some are extravagant, some enthusiastic, some foolish, and a few unutterably pathetic; but however their writers may differ otherwise, there is one positive conviction they unconsciously share, and there is one question they each and every one put to me: so it is *that* question that must be first answered, and that conviction that must be shaken.

The question is, "What chance has a girl in private life of getting on the stage?"

and to reply at once with brutal truthfulness and straight to the point, I must say, "Almost none."

But to answer her instant "Why?" I must first shake that positive conviction each writer has, that she is the only one that burns with the high ambition to be an actress, who hopes and fears, and secretly studies Juliet. It would be difficult to convince her that her own state, her own city, yes, her own block, could each produce a girl who firmly believes that *her* talent is equally great, and who has just the same strength of hope for the future stage existence.

Every city in the country is freely sprinkled with stage-loving, or, as they are generally termed, "stage-struck" girls. It is more than probable that at least a half-dozen girls in her own circle secretly cherish a hope for a glorious career on the stage, while her bosom friend most likely knows every line of *Pauline* and has prac-

tised the death scene of *Camille* hundreds of times. Surely, then, the would-be actresses can see that their own numbers constitute one of the greatest obstacles in their path.

But that is by no means all. Figures are always hard things to manage, and there is another large body of them, between a girl and her chances, in the number of trained actresses who are out of engagements. There is probably no profession in the world so overcrowded as is the profession of acting. "Why, then," the manager asks, "should I engage a girl who does not even know how to walk across the stage, when there are so many trained girls and women to choose from?"

"But," says or thinks some girl who reads these words, "you were an outsider, poor and without friends, yet you got your chance."

Very true; I did. But conditions then were different. The stage did not hold

then the place in public estimation which it now does. Theatrical people were little known and even less understood. Even the people who did not think all actors drunkards and all actresses immoral, did think they were a lot of flighty, silly buffoons, not to be taken seriously for a moment. The profession, by reason of this feeling, was rather a close corporation. The recruits were generally young relatives of the older actors. There was plenty of room, and people began at the bottom quite cheerfully and worked up. When a "ballet" was wanted, the manager advertised for extra girls, and sometimes received as many as three applicants in one day — when twenty were wanted. Such an advertisement to-day would call out a veritable mob of eager girls and women. *There* was my chance. To-day I should have no chance at all.

The theatrical ranks were already growing crowded when the "Schools of Acting" were started, and after that — goodness

gracious! actors and actresses started up as suddenly and numerously as mushrooms in an old pasture. And they, even *they* stand in the way of the beginner.

I know, then, of but three powers that can open the stage door to a girl who comes straight from private life, — a fortune, great influence, or superlative beauty. With a large amount of money a girl can unquestionably tempt a manager whose business is not too good, to give her an engagement. If influence is used, it must indeed be of a high social order to be strong enough favourably to affect the box-office receipts, and thus win an opening for the young débutante. As for beauty, it must be something very remarkable that will on its strength alone secure a girl an engagement. Mere prettiness will not do. Nearly all American girls are pretty. It must be a radiant and compelling beauty, and every one knows that there are not many such beauties, stage-struck or otherwise.

hearsay, but not by sight, they are not so black as they are painted.

Indeed, the manager is more often the pursued than the pursuer. Women there are, attractive, well-looking, well-dressed, some of whom, alas! in their determination to succeed, cast morality overboard, as an aeronaut casts over ballast, that they may rise more quickly. Now while these women bestow their adulation and delicate flattery upon the manager, he is not likely to disturb the modest and retiring newcomer in his company by unwelcome attentions. And should the young stranger prove earnest and bright, she would be doubly safe; for then she would have for the manager a commercial value, and he would be the last man to hurt or anger her by a too warmly expressed admiration, and so drive her into another theatre, taking all her possible future popularity and drawing power with her.

One other and better word I wish to add. If the unprotected young beginner finds her-

self the victim of some odious creature's persistent advances, letters, etc., let her not fret and weep and worry, but let her go quietly to her manager and lay her trouble before him, and, my word for it, he will find a way of freeing her from her tormentor. Yes, the manager is, generally speaking, a kindly, cheery, sharp business man, and no Moloch at all.

As for the "public," no self-respecting girl need be in danger from the "public." Admiring young rakes no longer have coaches waiting round the corner, into which they thrust their favourite actress as she leaves the theatre. If a man sends an actress extravagant letters or flowers, anonymously, she can of course do nothing, but equally of course she will not wear his flowers and so encourage him boldly to step up and speak to her some day. If the gentleman sends her jewellery or valuable gifts of any kind, rest assured his name will accompany the offering; then the actress has but

one thing to do, send the object back at once. If the infatuated one is a gentleman and worthy of her notice, he will surely find a perfectly correct and honourable way of making her acquaintance, otherwise she is well rid of him. No, I see no danger threatening a young actress from the "public."

There is danger in drifting at any time, so it may be well to warn young actresses against drifting into a too strong friendship. No matter how handsome or clever a man may be, if he approaches a modest girl with coarse familiarity, with brutalities on his lips, she is shocked, repelled, certainly not tempted. But let us say that the young actress feels rather strange and uncomfortable in her surroundings, that she is only on a smiling "good morning and good evening" footing with the company, and she has been promised a certain small part, and then at the last moment the part is given to some one else. The disappointment is cruel, and the suspicion that people are laughing in

their sleeves over the slight put upon her makes her feel sick and faint with shame, and just then a friendly hand places a chair for her and a kind voice says: "I'm awfully sorry you missed that chance, for I'm quite sure you would do the part far and away better than that milliner's block will. But don't distress yourself, your chance will come, and you will know how to make the most of it — I am sure."

And all the time the plain, perhaps the elderly man is speaking, he is shielding her from the eyes of the other people, and from her very soul she is grateful to him, and she holds up her head and smiles bravely.

Not long after, perhaps, she does get a chance, and with joyous eyes she watches for the coming of the man who comforted her, that she may tell him of her good luck. And his pleasure is plain, and he assures her that she will succeed. And he, an experienced actor, waits in the entrance to see her play her small part, and shakes her hand

and congratulates her when she comes off, and even tells her what to do next time at such a point, and her heart warms within her and is filled with gratitude for this "sympathetic friend," who helps her and has faith in her future. The poor child little dreams that temptation may be approaching her, softly, quietly, in the guise of friendship. So, all unconsciously, she grows to rely upon the advice of this quiet, unassuming man. She looks for his praise, for his approval. By and by their companionship reaches beyond the walls of the theatre. She respects him, admires, trusts him. Trusts him —he may be worthy, he may not! But it would be well for the young actresses to be on their guard against the "sympathetic friend."

Since we are speaking about absolute beginners, perhaps a word of warning may be given against *pretended* critics. The young actress trembles at the bare words "newspaper man." She ought to know that a critic

on a respectable paper holds a responsible position. When he serves a prominent and a leading journal, he is frequently recognized as an authority, and has a social as well as a professional position to maintain. Further, the professional woman does not strongly attract the critic personally. There is no glamour about stage people to him; but should he desire to make an actress's acquaintance, he would do so in the perfectly correct manner of a gentleman. But this is not known to the young stranger within the theatrical gates, and through her ignorance, which is far from bliss, she may be subjected to a humiliating and even dangerous experience. I am myself one of several women whom I know to have been victimized in early days.

The beginner, then, fearing above all things the newspaper, receives one evening a note common in appearance, coarse in expression, requesting her acquaintance, and signed "James Flotsam," let us say. Of

course she pays no attention, and two nights later a card reaches her — a very doubtful one at that — bearing the name "James Flotsam," and in the corner, *Herald.* She may be about to refuse to see the person, but some one will be sure to exclaim, "For mercy's sake! don't make an enemy on the 'press.'"

And trembling at the idea of being attacked or sneered at in print, without one thought of asking what *Herald* this unknown represents, without remembering that Miller's Pond or Somebody-else's Corners may have a *Herald*, she hastens to grant to this probably ignorant young lout the unchaperoned interview she would instantly refuse to a gentleman whose name was even well known to her; and trembling with fear and hope she will listen to his boastings "of the awful roasting he gave Billy This or Dick That," referring thus to the most prominent actors of the day, or to his promises of puffs for herself "when old Brown or Smith

are out of the office" (the managing and the city editors both being jealous of him, and blue pencilling him just for spite); and if Mr. Flotsam does not, without leave, bring up and present his chum, Mr. Jetsam, the young woman will be fortunate.

A little quiet thought will convince her that an editor would not assign such a person to report the burning of a barn or the interruption of a dog fight, and with deep mortification she will discover her mistake. The trick is as old as it is contemptible, and many a great paper has had its name put to the dishonourable use of frightening a young actress into an acquaintance with a self-styled critic.

Does this seem a small matter to you? Then you are mistaken. There are few things more serious for a young woman than an unworthy or undesirable acquaintance. She will be judged, not by her many correct friends, but by her one incorrect one. Again, feeling fear of his power to

work her injury, she ceases really to be a free agent, and Heaven knows what unwise concessions she may be flurried into; and of all the dangers visible or invisible in the path of a good girl, the most terrible is "opportunity." If you wish to avoid danger, if you wish to save yourself some face-reddening memory, give no one the "opportunity" to abuse your confidence, to wound you by word or deed. Ought I to point out one other unpleasant possibility? Temptation may approach the somewhat advanced young actress through money and power in the guise of the "patron of Art"—not a common form of temptation by any means. But what *has* been may be again, and it is none the easier to resist because it is unusual. When a young girl, with hot impatience, feels she is not advancing as rapidly as she should, the wealthy "patron of Art" declares it is folly for her to plod along so slowly, that he will free her from all trammels, he will provide play, wardrobe, com-

pany, and show the world that she is already an artist. To her trembling objection that she could only accept such tremendous aid from one of her own family, he would crushingly reply that "Art" (with a very big A) should rise above common conventionalities; that he does not think of *her* personally, but only the advance of professional "Art"; and if she must have it so, why-er, she may pay him back in the immediate future, though if she were the passionate lover of "Art" he had believed her to be, she would accept the freedom he offered and waste no thought on "ways and means" or "hows and whys."

Ah, poor child, the freedom he offers would be a more cruel bondage than slavery itself! The sensitive, proud girl would never place herself under such heavy obligations to any one on earth. She would keep her vanity in check, and patiently or impatiently hold on her way, — free, independent, — owing her final success to her own

honest work and God's blessing. Every girl should learn these hard words by heart, *Rien ne se donne, tout se paye ici-bas!* "Everything is paid for in this world!"

A number of young girls have asked me to give them some idea of the duties of a beginner in the profession, or what claims the theatre makes upon her time. Very well. We will first suppose you a young and attractive girl. You have been carefully reared and have been protected by all the conventionalities of refined social life. Now you enter the theatrical profession, depending solely upon your salary for your support, meaning to become a great actress and to keep a spotless reputation, and you will find your work cut out for you. At the stage door you will have to leave quite a parcel of conventional rules. In the first place, you will have to go about *alone* at night as well as by day. Your salary won't pay for a maid or escort of any kind. That is very dreadful at first, but in time you will

learn to walk swiftly, with stony face, unseeing eyes, and ears deaf to those hyenas of the city streets, who make life a misery to the unprotected woman. The rules of a theatre are many and very exacting, and you must scrupulously obey them or you will surely be forfeited a stated sum of money. There is no gallantry in the management of a company, and these forfeits are genuine, be you man or woman.

You have heard that cleanliness is next to godliness, here you will learn that *punctuality* is next to godliness. As you hope for fame here and life hereafter, never be late to rehearsal. That is the theatrical unpardonable sin! You will attend rehearsal at any hour of the day the manager chooses to call you, but that is rarely, if ever, before 10 A.M. Your legitimate means of attracting the attention of the management are extreme punctuality and quick studying of your part. If you can come to the second rehearsal perfect in your lines, you are bound

to attract attention. Your fellow-players will not love you for it, because they will seem dull or lazy by comparison; but the stage manager will make a note, and it may lead to better things.

Your gowns at this stage of your existence may cause you great anguish of mind — I do not refer to their cost, but to their selection. You will not be allowed to say, "I will wear white or I will wear pink," because the etiquette of the theatre gives the leading lady the first choice of colours, and after her the lady next in importance, you wearing what is left.

In some New York theatres actresses have no word in the selection of their gowns: they receive plates from the hand of the management, and dress accordingly. This is enough to whiten the hair of a sensitive woman, who feels dress should be a means of expression, an outward hint of the character of the woman she is trying to present.

Should you not be in a running play, you

may be an understudy for one or two of the ladies who are. You will study their parts, be rehearsed in their "business," and will then hold yourself in readiness to take, on an instant's notice, either of their places, in case of sickness, accident, or ill news coming to either of them. If the parts are good ones, you will be astonished at the perfect immunity of actresses from all mishaps; but all the same you may never leave your house without leaving word as to where you are going and how long you expect to stay.

You may never go to another theatre without permission of your own manager; indeed, she is a lucky "understudy" who does not have to report at the theatre at 7 o'clock every night to see if she is needed. And it sometimes happens that the only sickness the poor "understudy" knows of during the whole run of the play is that sickness of deferred hope which has come to her own heart.

Not so very hard a day or night, so far

as physical labour goes, is it? But, oh! the sameness, the deadly monotony, of repeating the same words to the same person at the same moment every night, sick or well, sad or happy — the same, same words!

A "one-play" company offers the worst possible chance to the beginner. The more plays there are, the more you learn from observation, as well as from personal effort, to make the parts you play seem as unlike one another as possible. A day like this admits of no drives, no calls, no "teas"; you see, then, a theatrical life is not one long picnic.

If there is one among my readers to whom the dim and dingy half-light of the theatre is dearer than the God-given radiance of the sunlight; if the burnt-out air with its indescribable odour, seemingly composed of several parts of cellar mould, a great many parts of dry rot or unsunned dust, the whole veined through and through with small streaks of escaped illuminating gas — if this

heavy, lifeless air is more welcome to your nostrils than could be the clover-sweetened breath of the greenest pasture; if that great black gulf, yawning beyond the extinguished footlights, makes your heart leap up at your throat; if without noting the quality or length of your part the just plain, bald fact of "acting something" thrills you with nameless joy; if the rattle-to-bang of the ill-treated old overture dances through your blood, and the rolling up of the curtain on the audience at night is to you as the magic blossoming of a mighty flower — if these are the things that you feel, your fate is sealed: Nature is imperious; and through brain, heart, and nerve she cries to you, ACT, ACT, ACT! and act you must! Yes, I know what I have said of the difficulties in your way, but I have faith to believe that, if God has given you a peculiar talent, God will aid you to find a way properly to exercise that talent. You may receive many rebuffs, but you

must keep on trying to get into a stock company if possible, or, next best, to get an engagement with a star who produces many plays. Take anything, no matter how small, to begin with. You will learn how to walk, to stand still — a tremendous accomplishment. You will get acquainted with your own hands, and cease to worry about them.

You can train your brain by studying Shakespeare and the old comedies. Study not merely the leading part, but all the female parts; it is not only good training, but you never know when an opportunity may come to you. The element of "chance" enters very largely into the theatrical life. Above all, try to remember the lines of every female character in the play you are acting in; it might mean a sudden rise in your position if you could go on, at a moment's notice, and play the part of some one suddenly taken ill.

Then work, work, and above all observe.

Never fail to watch the acting of those about you. Get at the cause of the effects. Avoid the faults, and profit by the good points of the actors before you, but never permit yourself to imitate them.

One suggestion I would make is to keep your eyes open for signs of character in the real life about you. The most successful bit of business I had in "Camille" I copied from a woman I saw in a Broadway car. If a face impresses you, study it, try afterward to recall its expression. Note how different people express their anger: some are redly, noisily angry; some are white and cold in their rage. All these things will make precious material for you to draw upon some day, when you have a character to create; and you will not need to say, "Let me see, Miss So-and-So would stand like this, and speak very fast, or very slow," etc.

You will do independent work, good work, and will never be quite satisfied with it, but will eagerly try again, for great artists are so

constituted; and the hard life of disappointments, self-sacrifices, and many partings, where strong, sweet friendships are formed only to be broken by travelling orders, will all be forgotten when, the glamour of the footlights upon you, saturated with light, thrilling to music, intoxicated with applause, you find the audience is an instrument for you to play upon at will. And such a moment of conscious, almost divine power is the reward that comes to those who sacrifice many things that they may act.

So if you really are one of these, I can only say, "Act, act!" and Heaven have you in its holy keeping.

But, dear gifted woman, pause before you put your hand to the plough that will turn your future into such strange furrows; remember, the life of the theatre is a hard life, a homeless life; that it is a wandering up and down the earth; a life filled full with partings, with sweet, lost friendships; that its triumphs are brilliant but brief.

If you do truly love acting, simply and solely for the sake of acting, then all will be well with you, and you will be content; but verily you will be a marvel.

For the poor girl or woman who, because she has to earn her own living, longs to become an actress, my heart aches.

You will say good-by to mother's petting; you will live in your trunk. The time will come when that poor hotel trunk (so called to distinguish it from the trunk that goes to the theatre, when you are travelling or en route), with its dents and scars, will be the only friendly object to greet you in your desolate boarding-house, with its one wizened, unwilling gas-burner, and its outlook upon back yards and cats, or roofs and sparrows, its sullen, hard-featured bed, its despairing carpet; for you see, you will not have the money that might take you to the front of the house and four burners. Rain or shine, you will have to make your lonely, often frightened way to and from the theatre.

At rehearsals you will have to stand about, wearily waiting hours while others rehearse over and over again their more important scenes; yet you may not leave for a walk or a chat, for you do not know at what moment your scene may be called. You will not be made much of. You will receive a "Good morning" or "Good evening" from the company, probably nothing more. If you are travelling, you will literally *live* in your hat and cloak. You will breakfast in them many and many a time, you will dine in them regularly, that you may rise at once and go to the theatre or car. You will see no one, go nowhere.

If you are in earnest, you will simply endure the first year, — endure and study, — and all for what? That, after dressing in the corner farthest from the looking-glass, in a dismal room you would scarcely use for your housemaid's brooms and dusters at home, you may stand for a few moments in the background of some scene, and watch

the leading lady making the hit in the foreground. Will these few, well-dressed, well-lighted, music-thrilled moments repay you for the loss of home love, home comfort, home stardom?

To that bright, energetic girl, just home from school, overeducated, perhaps, with nothing to do, restless, — forgive me, — vain, who wants to go upon the stage, let me say: "Pause a moment, my dear, in your comfortable home, and think of the unemployed actresses who are suffering from actual want. Is there one among you, who, if you had the chance, would care to strike the bread from the hand of one of these? Ask God that the scales of unconscious selfishness may fall from your eyes. Look about you and see if there is not some duty, however small, the more irksome the better, that you may take from your mother's daily load, some service you can render for father, brother, sister, aunt; some daily household task, so small you may feel contemptuous of

it, yet some one must do it, and it may be a special thorn in that some one's side. So surely as you force yourself to do the small things nearest your hand, so surely will you be called upon for greater service."

And oh! my dears, my dears, a loving mother's declaration, "I don't know what I should do without my daughter," is sweeter and more precious than the careless applause of strangers. Try, then, to be patient; find some occupation, if it is nothing more than the weekly putting in order of bureau drawers for some unusually careless member of the family; and, having a good home, thank God and your parents, and stay in it.

And now, having added the insult of preaching at you to the injury of disappointing you, I suppose you will accuse me of rank hypocrisy; but you will be wrong, because with outstretched hands I stand and proclaim myself your well-wisher and your friend.



CHAPTER II

THE STAGE AND REAL LIFE

HOW often we hear people say, "Oh, that's only a play!" or "That could only happen in a play!" and yet it's surprising how often actors receive proof positive that their plays are reflecting happenings in real life.

When Mr. Daly had "L'Article 47" on, at the 5th Avenue Theatre, for instance, the key-note of the play was the insanity of the heroine. In the second, most important act, before her madness had been openly pro-

claimed, it had to be indicated simply by manner, tone, and gesture; and the one action of drawing the knee up into her clasping arms, and then swaying the body mechanically from side to side, while muttering rapidly to herself, thrilled the audience with the conviction of her affliction more subtly than words could have done. One night, when that act was on, I had just begun to sway from side to side, when from the auditorium there arose one long, *long*, agonizing wail, and that wail was followed by the heavy falling of a woman's body from her chair into the centre aisle.

In an instant all was confusion, every one sprang to his feet; even the musicians, who were playing some creepy, incidental music, as was the fashion then, stopped and half rose from their places. It was a dreadful moment! Somehow I kept a desperate hold upon my strained and startled nerves and swayed on from side to side. Mr. Stoepel, the leader, glanced at me. I caught



Clara Morris in "L' Article 47"

his eye and said quick and low, "Play! play!"

He understood; but instead of simply resuming where he had left off, from force of habit he first gave the leader's usual three sharp taps upon his music desk, and then — so queer a thing is an audience — those people, brought to their feet in an agony of terror, of fire, panic, and sudden death by a woman's cry, now at that familiar tap, tap, tap, broke here and there into laughter. By sixes and sevens, then by tens and twenties, they sheepishly seated themselves, only turning their heads with pitying looks while the ushers removed the unconscious woman.

When the act was over, Mr. Daly — a man of few words on such occasions — held my hands hard for a moment, and said, "Good girl, good girl!" and I, pleased, deprecatingly remarked, "It was the music, sir, that quieted them," to which he made answer, "And it was you who ordered the music!"

Verily, no single word could be spoken on his stage without his knowledge. Later that evening we learned that the lady who had cried out had been brought to the theatre by friends who hoped to cheer her up (Heaven save the mark!) and help her to forget her dreadful and recent experience of placing her own mother in an insane asylum. Learned, too, that her very first suspicion of that poor mother's condition had come from finding her one morning sitting up in bed, her arms embracing her knees, while she swayed from side to side unceasingly, muttering low and fast all the time.

Poor lady! no wonder her worn nerves gave way when all unexpectedly that dread scene was reproduced before her, and worse still before the staring public.

Then Mr. Charles Matthews, the veteran English comedian, came over to act at Mr. Daly's. His was a graceful, polished, volatile style of acting, and he had a high opinion of his power as a maker of fun; so

that he was considerably annoyed one night when he discovered that one of his auditors would not laugh. Laugh? would not even smile at his efforts.

Mr. Matthews, who was past seventy, was nervous, excitable, — and, well, just a wee bit *cranky;* and when the play was about half over, he came "off," angrily talking to himself, and ran against Mr. Lewis and me, as we were just about "going on." Instantly he exclaimed, "Look here! look here!" taking from his vest pocket a broad English gold piece and holding it out on his hand, then added, "And look there! look there!" pointing out a gentleman sitting in the opposite box.

"Do you see that stupid dolt over there? Well, I've toiled over him till I sweat like a harvest hand, and laugh — he won't; smile — he won't."

I remarked musingly, "He looks like a graven image"; while Lewis suggested cheerfully, "Perhaps he is one."

"No, no!" groaned the unfortunate star, "I'm afraid not! I'm — I'm almost certain I saw him move once. But look here now, you're a deucedly funny pair; just turn yourselves loose in this scene. I'll protect you from Daly, — do anything you like, — and the one who makes that wooden man laugh, wins this gold piece."

It was not the gold piece that tempted us to our fall, but the hope of succeeding where the star had failed. I seized one moment in which to notify old man Davidge of what was going on, as he had a prominent part in the coming scene, and then we were on the stage.

The play was "The Critic," the scene a burlesque rehearsal of an old-time melodrama. Our opportunities were great, and Heaven knows we missed none of them. New York audiences are quick, and in less than three minutes they knew the actors had taken the bit between their teeth and were off on a mad race of fun. Every-

thing seemed to "go." We three knew one another well. Each saw another's idea and caught it, with the certainty of a boy catching a ball. The audience roared with laughter; the carpenters and scene-shifters — against the rule of the theatre — crowded into the entrances with answering laughter; but the man in the box gave no sign.

Worse and worse we went on. Mr. Daly, white with anger, came behind the scene, gasping out, "Are they utterly mad?" to the little Frenchman whom he had made prompter because he could not speak English well enough to prompt us; who, frantically pulling his hair, cried, "Oui! oui! zey are all mad — mad like ze dog in ze summer-time!"

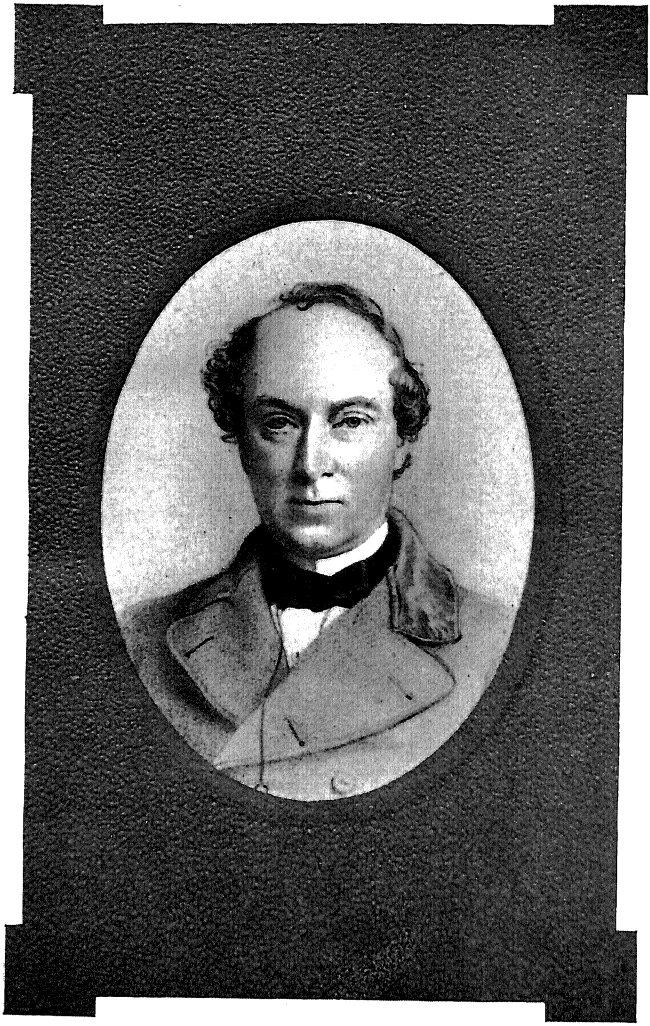
Mr. Daly stamped his feet and cleared his throat to attract our attention; but, trusting to Mr. Matthews's protection, we grinned cheerfully at him and continued on our downward path. At last we reached the "climax," and suddenly I heard Mr. Mat-

thews say, "She's got him — look — I think she's won!"

I could not help it — I turned my head to see if the "graven image" could really laugh. Yes, he was moving! his face wore some faint expression; but — but he was turning slowly to the laughing audience, and the expression on his face was one of *wonder!*

Matthews groaned aloud, the curtain fell, and Daly was upon us. Matthews said the cause of the whole business was that man in the box; while Mr. Daly angrily declared, "The man in the box could have nothing to do with the affair, since he was *deaf* and *dumb*, and had been all his life."

I remember sitting down very hard and very suddenly. I remember that Davidge, who was an Englishman, "blasted" a good many things under his breath; and then Mr. Matthews, exclaiming with wonder, told us he had been playing for years in a farce where this very scene was enacted,



Charles Matthews



CHAPTER III

IN CONNECTION WITH "DIVORCE" AND DALY'S

"DIVORCE" had just settled down for its long run, when one evening I received a letter whose weight and bulk made me wonder whether the envelope contained a "last will and testament" or a "three-act play." On opening it I found it perfectly correct in appearance, on excellent paper, in the clearest handwriting, and using the most perfect orthography and grammar: a gentleman had nevertheless gently, almost tenderly, reproached me for using *the story of his life* for the play.

He said he knew Mr. Daly's name was

on the bills as author; but as I was an Ohio woman, he of course understood perfectly that I had furnished Mr. D. with *his* story for the play. He explained at great length that he forgave me because I had not given Mr. Daly his real name, and also remarked, in rather an aggrieved way, that *he* had two children and only one appeared in the play. He also seemed considerably surprised that Mr. Harkins (who played my husband) did not wear a large red beard, as every one, he said, knew *he* had not shaved for years.

My laughter made its way over the transom, and in a moment my neighbour was at the dressing-room door, asking for something she did not need, that she might find out the why and wherefore of the fun; and when the red beard had started her off, another came for something she knew I didn't own, and she too fell before the beard; while a third writhed over the forgiveness extended to me, and exclaimed:—

"Oh, the well-educated idiot, isn't he delicious?"

By and by the letter started to make a tour of the gentlemen's rooms, and, unlike the rolling-stone that gathered no moss, it gathered laughter as it moved.

It was only Mr. Daly who astonished me by not laughing. He, instead, seemed quite gratified that his play had so clearly reflected a real life story.

In the business world of New York there was known at that time a pair of brothers; they were in dry-goods. The firm was new, and they were naturally anxious to extend their trade. The buyer for a merchant in the far Northwest had placed a small order with the brothers B., which had proved so satisfactory that the merchant coming himself to New York the next fall informed the brothers of his intention of dealing heavily with them. Of course they were much pleased. They had received him warmly and had offered him some hospitality,

which latter he declined; but as it was late in the day, and as he was an utter stranger to the city, he asked if there was anything going on that would help pass an evening for him; and the elder Mr. B. had instantly answered, Yes; that there was a big success "on" at Daly's Theatre, right next door to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, at which the stranger was stopping. And so with thanks and bows, and a smiling promise to be at the store at ten o'clock the next morning, ready for business, the brothers and the Western merchant parted.

I happened to be in the store next morning before ten, and the elder B., who was one of my few acquaintances, was chatting to me of nothing in particular, when I saw such an expression of surprise come into his face, that I turned at once in the direction his glance had taken, and saw a man plunging down the aisle toward us, like an ugly steer. He looked a cross between a Sabbath-school superintendent and a cattle

dealer. He was six feet tall and very clumsy, and wore the black broadcloth of the church and the cow-hide boots, big hat, and woollen comforter of the cattle man; while his rage was so evident that even organ-grinders and professional beggars fled from his presence. On he came, stamping and shaking his head steerlike. One expected every moment to hear him bellow. When he came up to Mr. B., it really did seem that the man must fall in a fit. When he could speak, he burst into vituperation and profanity. He d—d the city, its founders, and its present occupants. He d—d Mr. B., his ancestors, his relatives near and distant, by blood and by law; but he was exceptionally florid when he came to tell Mr. B. how many kinds of a fool he was.

When his breath was literally gone, my unfortunate friend, who had alternately flushed and paled under the attack, said:—

"Mr. Dash, if you will be good enough to explain what this is all about—"

"Explain!" howled the enraged man, "explain! in the place where I come from our jokes don't need to be explained. You ring-tail gibbering ape, come out here on the sidewalk, and I'll explain!"

Then he paused an instant, as a new thought came to him.

"Oh, yes," he cried, "and if I take you out there, to lick some of the *fun* out of you, one of your constables will jump on to me! You're a sweet, polite lot, to play jokes on strangers, and then hide behind your constables!"

Then his voice fell, his eyes narrowed, he looked an ugly customer as he approached Mr. B., saying:—

"You thought it d—d funny to send me to that play last night, on purpose to show me you knew I had just got a divorce from my wife! And if I have divorced her, let me tell you she's a finer woman than you ever knew in your whole fool life! It was d—d funny, wasn't it, to send a lonely man

— a stranger — into a playhouse to see his own misery acted out before him! Well, in New York that may be fun, and call for laughter, but at my home it would call for *bullets* — and get 'em too!"

And he turned and strode out. Mr. B. had failed to mention the name of the play when he recommended it; and the Western man, whose skin seemed as sensitive as it was thick, thought that he was being made fun of, when the play of "Divorce" unfolded before him.

When "Alixe" was produced, there was one feature of the play that aroused great curiosity. Mr. Daly was called upon again and again to decide wagers, and considerable money changed hands over the question, before people could be convinced that it was I who was carried upon the stage, and not a waxen image of me.

Many people will remember that in that heart-rending play, Alixe, the innocent victim of others' wrong-doing, is carried on

dead, — drowned, — and lies for the entire act in full view of the audience. Now that was the only play I ever saw before playing in it; and in Paris the Alixe had been so evidently alive that the play was quite ruined.

When I had that difficult scene intrusted to me, I thought long and hard, trying to find some way to conceal my breathing. I knew I could "make-up" my face all right — but that evident breathing. I had always noticed that the tighter a woman laced, the higher she breathed and the greater was the movement of her chest and bust. That gave me a hint. I took off my corset. Still when lying down there was movement that an opera glass would betray.

Then I tried a little trick. Alixe wore white of a soft crépy material. I had duplicate dresses made, only one was very loose in the waist. Then I had a great big circular cloak of the same white material, quite unlined; and when I was made up for the

death scene, with lilies and grasses in hand and hair, I stood upon a chair and held a corner of the great soft cloak against my breast, while my maid carefully wound the rest of it loosely about my body, round and round, right down to my ankles, and fastened it there; result: a long, white-robed figure, without one trace of waist line or bust, and beneath ample room for natural breathing, without even the tremor of a fold to betray it.

At once the question rose, was it a wax figure or was it not? One gentleman came to Mr. Daly and asked him for the artist's address, saying the likeness to Miss Morris was so perfect it might be herself, and he wanted to get a wax model of his wife. Nor would he be convinced until Mr. Daly finally brought him back to the stage, and he saw me unpin my close drapery, and trot off to my dressing-room.

The play was a great success, and often the reading of the suicide's letter was punc-

tuated by actual sobs from the audience, instead of those from the mother. Young club-men used to make a point of going to the "Saturday Funeral," as they called the "Alixe" matinee. They would gather afterward, opposite to the theatre, and make fun of the women's faces as they came forth with tear-streaked cheeks, red noses, and swollen eyes, and making frantic efforts to slip powder-puffs under their veils and repair damages. If glances could have killed, there would have been mourning in earnest in the houses of the club-men.

One evening, as the audience was nearly out and the lights were being extinguished in the auditorium, a young man came back and said to an usher: —

"There is a gentleman up there in the balcony; you'd better see to him, before the lights are all put out."

"A gentleman? what's he doing there, at this time, I'd like to know?" grumbled the usher as he climbed up the stairs.

But next moment he was calling for help, for there in a front seat, fallen forward, with his head on the balcony rail, sat an old man whose silvery white hair reflected the faint light that fell upon it. They carried him to the office; and after stimulants had been administered he recovered and apologized for the trouble he had caused. As he seemed weak and shaken, Mr. Daly thought one of the young men ought to see him safely home, but he said: —

"No, he was only in New York on business — he was at a hotel but a few steps away, and — and —" he hesitated. "You are thinking I had no right to go to a theatre alone," he added, "but I am not a sick man — only — only to-night I received an awful shock."

He paused. Mr. Daly noted the quiver of his firm old lips. He dismissed the usher; then he turned courteously to the old gentleman and said: —

"As it was in my theatre you received that shock, will you explain it to me?"

And in a low voice the stranger told him that he had had a daughter, an only child, a little blond, laughing thing, whom he worshipped. She was a mere child when she fell in love. Her choice had not pleased him, and looking upon the matter as a fancy merely, he had forbidden further intercourse between the lovers. "And — and it was in the summer, and — dear God, when that yellow-haired girl was carried dead upon the stage tonight, even the grass clutched between her fingers, it was a repetition of what occurred in my country home, sir, three years ago."

Then Mr. Daly gave his arm to the old stranger, and in dead silence they walked to the hotel and parted.

Once more the play had reflected real life.



CHAPTER IV

"MISS MULTON" AT THE UNION SQUARE

MR. PALMER had produced "Miss Multon" at the Union Square, and we were fast settling down to our steady, regular gait, having got over the false starts and breaks and nervous shyings of the opening performance, when another missive of portentous bulk reached me.

It was one of those letters in which you can find everything except an end; and the writer was one of those men whose subjects, like an unhealthy hair, always

split at the end, making at least two subjects out of one.

For instance, he started to show me the resemblance between his life and the story of the play; but when he came to mention his wife, the hair split, and instead of continuing, he branched off, to tell me she was the step-daughter of "So-and-so," that her own father, who was "Somebody," had died of "something," and had been buried "somewhere"; and then that hair split, and he proceeded to expatiate on the two fathers' qualities, and state their different business occupations, after which, out of breath, and far, far from the original subject, he had to hark back two and a half pages and tackle his life again.

Truth to tell, it was rather pathetic reading when he kept to the point, for love for his wife cropped out plainly between the lines after years of separation. Suddenly he began to adorn me with a variety of fine qualities. He assured me that I had

penetration, clear judgment, and a sense of justice, as well as a warm heart.

I was staggering under these piled-up traits, when he completely floored me, so to speak, by asking me to take his case under consideration, assuring me he would act upon my advice. If I thought he had been too severe in his conduct toward his wife, to say so, and he would seek her out, and humble himself before her, and ask her to return to him.

He also asked me whether, as a woman, I thought she would be influenced wholly by the welfare of her children, or whether she would be likely to retain a trace of affection for himself.

That letter was an outrage. The idea of appealing to me, who had not had the experience of a single divorce to rely upon! Even my one husband was so recent an acquisition as to be still considered a novelty. And yet I, all unacquainted with divorce proceedings, legal separations, and

common law ceremonies, was called upon to make this strange man's troubles my own, to sort out his domestic woes, and say: —

"This sin" is yours, but "that sin" is hers, and "those other sins" belong wholly to the co-respondent.

What a useful word that is! It has such a decent sound, almost respectable. We are a refined people, even in our sins, and I know no word in the English language we strive harder to avoid using in any of its forms than that word of brutal vulgarity, but terrific meaning — adultery.

The adulterer may be in our midst, but we have refinement enough to refer to him as the "So-and-So's" co-respondent.

I was engaged in saying things more earnest and warm than correct and polished — things I fear the writer of the letter could not have approved of — when I was pulled up short by the opening words of another paragraph, which said: "God! if

women suffer in real life over the loss of children, husband, and home, as you suffered before my very eyes last night in the play; if my wife is tortured like that, it would have been better for me to have passed out of life, and have left her in peace. But I did not know that women suffered so. Help me, advise me."

I could not ignore that last appeal. What my answer was you will not care to know; but if it was brief, it was at least not flippant; and before writing it, I, in my turn, appealed for help, only my appeal was made upon my knees to the Great Authority.

On election nights it is customary for the manager to read or have read to the audience the returns as fast as they come in from various points, showing how the voting has gone.

An election was just over, when one evening a small incident occurred during a performance of "Miss Multon" that we would



Clara Morris and James Parselle in 3d Act of "Miss Multon"



gladly have dispensed with. In the quarrel scene between the two women, the first and supposedly dead wife, in her character of governess to her own children, is goaded by the second wife into such a passion that she finally throws off all concealment and declares her true character and name.

The scene was a strong one, and was always looked forward to eagerly by the audience.

On the evening I speak of the house was packed almost to suffocation. The other characters in the play had withdrawn, and for the first time the two women were alone together. Both keyed up almost to the breaking point, we faced each other, and there was a dead, I might almost say a *deadly* pause before either spoke.

It was very effective — that silence before the storm. People would lean forward and fairly hold their breath, feeling there was a death struggle coming. And just at that very moment of tensest feeling, as we two

women silently measured each other, a man's voice clearly and exultantly declared: —

"Well, *now*, we'll get the returns read, I reckon."

In one instant the whole house was in a roar of laughter. Under cover of the noise I said to my companion, who was showing her annoyance, "Keep still! keep still!"

And as we stood there like statues, utterly ignoring the interruption, there was a sudden outbreak of hissing, and the laughter stopped as suddenly as it had burst out, and our scene went on, receiving even more than its usual meed of applause. But when the curtain had fallen, I had my own laugh; for *it was* funny, very funny.

In Boston there was an interruption of a different nature. It was at a matinee performance. There were tear-wet faces everywhere you looked. The last act was on. I was slipping to my knees in my vain entreaty to be allowed to see my children as their

mother, not merely as their dying governess, when a tall, slim, black-robed woman rose up in the parquet. She flung out her arms in a superb gesture, and in a voice of piercing anguish cried: —

"For God's sake, let her have her children! I've lived through such loss, but she can't; it will kill her!"

Tears sprang to the eyes of every one on the stage, and there was a perceptible halt in the movement of the play. And when, at the death scene, a lady was carried out in a faint, we were none of us surprised to hear it was *she* who had so far forgotten where she was as to make that passionate plea for a woman whose suffering was probably but a faint reflection of her own.



CHAPTER V

THE "NEW MAGDALEN" AT THE UNION SQUARE

ONE night at the Union Square Theatre, when the "New Magdalen" was running, we became aware of the presence of a distinguished visitor — a certain actress from abroad.

As I looked at the beautiful woman, magnificently dressed and jewelled, I found it simply impossible to believe the stories I had heard of her frightful poverty, in the days of her lowly youth.

Her manner was listless, her expression bored; even the conversation which she frequently indulged in seemed a weariness to the flesh; while her applause was so

plainly a mere matter of courtesy as almost to miss being a courtesy at all.

When, therefore, in the last act, I approached that truly dreadful five-page speech, which after a laconic "Go on!" from the young minister is continued through several more pages, I actually trembled with fear, lest her *ennui* should find some unpleasant outward expression. However, I dared not balk at the jump, so took it as bravely as I could.

As I stood in the middle of the stage addressing the minister, and my lover on my left, I faced her box directly. I can see her now. She was almost lying in her chair, her hands hanging limply over its arms, her face, her whole body suggesting a repressed yawn.

I began, slowly the words fell, one by one, in low, shamed tones: —

"I was just eight years old, and I was half dead with starvation."

Her hands closed suddenly on the arms of

her chair, and she lifted herself upright. I went on:—

"I was alone — the rain was falling." (She drew her great fur cloak closely about her.) "The night was coming on — and — and — I begged — *openly* — LOUDLY — as only a hungry child can beg."

She sat back in her seat with a pale, frowning face; while within the perfumed furry warmth of her cloak she shivered so that the diamonds at her ears sent out innumerable tiny spears of colour.

The act went on to its close; her attention never flagged. When I responded to a call before the curtain, she gravely handed me her bunch of roses.

A few moments later, by a happy accident, I was presented to her; when with that touch of bitterness that so often crept into her voice she said:—

"You hold your glass too steadily and at too true an angle to quite please me."

"I do not understand," I answered.

She smiled, her radiantly lovely smile, then with just a suspicion of a sneer replied, "Oh, yes, I think you do; at all events, I do not find it amusing to be called upon to look at too perfect a reflection of my own childhood."

At which I exclaimed entreatingly, "Don't — please don't — "

I might have found it hard to explain just what I meant; but she understood, for she gave my hand a quick, hard pressure, and a kind look shone from her splendid eyes. Next moment she was sweeping superbly toward her carriage, with her gentlemen in waiting struggling for the opportunity to do her service. So here, again, was the play reflecting real life.

But surely I have given instances enough in illustration of my original claim that the most dramatic scenes in plays are generally the mere reflections of happenings in real life; while the recognition of such scenes often causes a serious interruption to the

play, though goodness knows there are plenty of interruptions from other causes.

One that comes often to my mind occurred at Daly's. He once tried to keep the theatre open in the summer-time — that was a failure. Two or three plays were tried, then he abandoned the scheme. But while "No Name" was on, Mr. Parks was cast for a part he was utterly unsuited for. He stamped and stammered out his indignation and objection, but he was not listened to, so on he went.

During the play he was found seated at a table; and he not answering a question put to him, his housekeeper knelt at his side, lifted his hand, and let it fall, heavily, then in awed tones exclaimed, "He is dead!"

Now there is no use denying that, clever actor as he was, he was very, *very* bad in that part; and on the third night, when the housekeeper let his hand fall and said, "He is dead!" in clear and hearty response from the gallery came the surprising words, "Thank God!"

The laughter that followed was not only long-continued, but it broke out again and again. As one young woman earnestly remarked next day: "You see he so perfectly expressed all our feelings. We were all as thankful as the man in the gallery, but we didn't like to say so."

Parks, however, was equal to the occasion. He gravely suggested that Mr. Daly would do well to engage that chap, as he was the only person who had made a hit in the play.

Parks was, by the way, very droll in his remarks about theatrical matters. One day Mr. Daly concluded he would "cut" one of the acts we were rehearsing, and it happened that Parks's part, which was already short, suffered severely. He, of course, said nothing, but a little later he introduced a bit of business which was very funny, but really did not suit the scene. Mr. Daly noticed it, and promptly cut that out too. Then was Parks wroth indeed.

After rehearsal, he and Mr. Lewis were walking silently homeward, when they came upon an Italian street musician. The man ground at his movable piano, the wife held the tambourine, while his leggy little daughter danced with surprising grace on the stone walk. As she trotted about gathering her harvest of pennies, Parks put his hand on her shoulder and said solemnly:—

"You ought to be devilish glad you're not in Daly's company; he'd cut that dance out if you were."

One evening in New Orleans, when we were playing "Camille," a coloured girl, who had served me as dressing-maid, came to see me, and I gave her a "pass," that she might see from the "front" the play she had so often dressed me for. She went to the gallery and found herself next to a young black man, who had brought his sweetheart to see her first play.

The girl was greatly impressed and easily moved, and at the fourth act, when Armand

hurled the money at me, striking me in the face, she turned to her young man, saying savagely, "You, Dave, you got ter lay for dat white man ter night, an' lick der life outen him."

Next moment I had fallen at Armand's feet. The curtain was down and the girl was excitedly declaring, I was dead! while Dave assured her over and over again, "No, honey, she carn't be dead yit, 'cause, don' yer see, der's anudder act, an' she just nacherly's got ter be in it."

When, however, the last act was on, it was Dave himself who did the business. The pathetic death scene was almost over, when applause broke from the upper part of the house. Instantly a mighty and unmistakable negro voice, said: "Hush — hush! She's climin' der golden stair dis time, shure — keep still!"

My devoted "Nannine" leaned over me to hide my laughing face from the audience, who quickly recovered from the interruption,

while for once Camille, the heart-broken, died with a laugh in her throat.

In the same city I had, one matinee, to come down three steps on to the stage. I was quite gorgeous in one of my best gowns; for one likes to dress for Southern girls, they are so candidly pleased with your pretty things. My skirt caught on a nail at the very top step, so that when I reached the stage my train was stretched out full length, and in the effort a scene-hand made to free it, it turned over, so that the rose-pink lining could be plainly seen, when an awed voice exclaimed, "For de Lor's sake, dat woman's silk lin'd clear frou!" and the performance began in a gale of laughter.



"ODETTE" IN THE WEST. A CHILD'S FIRST PLAY

AN odd and somewhat touching little incident occurred one evening when we were in the far Northwest. There was a blizzard on just then, and the cold was something terrible. I had a severe attack of throat trouble, and my doctor had been with me most of the day. His little boy, hearing him speak of me, was seized with a desire to go to the theatre, and coaxed so well that his father promised to take him.

The play was "Odette." The doctor and

his pretty little son sat in the end seats of the parquet circle, close to the stage and almost facing the whole house. The little fellow watched his first play closely. As the comedy bit went on, he smiled up at his father, saying audibly, "I like her — don't you, papa?"

Papa silenced him, while a few people who had overheard smiled over the child's unconsciousness of observers. But when I had changed my dress and crept into the darkened room in a *robe de chambre;* when the husband had discovered my wrong-doing and was driving me out of his house, a child's cry of protest came from the audience. At the same moment, the husband raised his hand to strike. I repelled him with a gesture and went staggering off the stage; while that indignant little voice cried, "Papa! papa! can't you have that man arrested?" and the curtain fell.

One of the actors ran to the peep-hole in the curtain, and saw the doctor leading out

the little man, who was then crying bitterly, the audience smiling and applauding him, one might say affectionately.

A bit later the doctor came to my dressing-room to apologize and to tell me the rest of it. When the curtain had fallen, the child had begged: "Take me out — take me out!" and the doctor, thinking he might be ill, rose and led him out. No sooner had they reached the door, however, than he pulled his hand away, crying: "Quick, papa! quick! you go round the block that way, and I'll run round this way, and we'll be sure to find that poor lady that's out in the cold — just in her nighty!"

In vain he tried to explain, the child only grew more wildly excited; and finally the doctor promised, if the child would come home at once, only two blocks away, he would return and look for the lady — in the nighty. And he had taken the little fellow home and had seen him fling himself into his mother's arms, and with tears and sobs

tell her of the "poor lady whose husband had driven her right out into the blizzard, don't you think, mamma, and only her nighty on; and, mamma, she hadn't done one single bad thing — not one!"

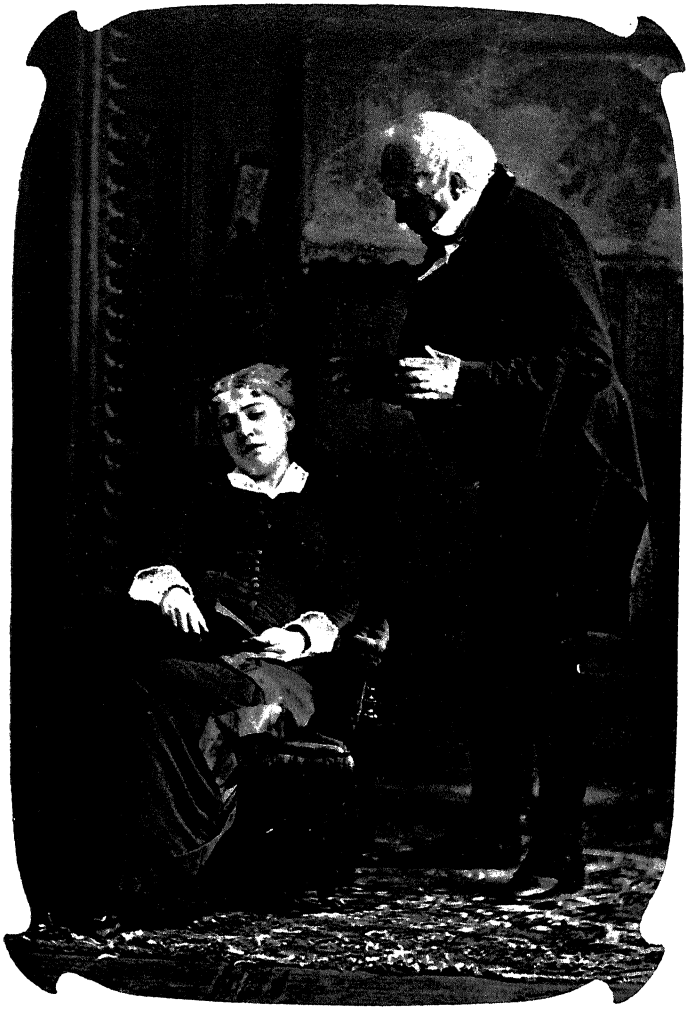
Poor, warm-hearted, innocent little man; he was assured later on that the lady had been found and taken to a hotel; and I hope his next play was better suited to his tender years.

In Philadelphia we had a very ludicrous interruption during the last act of "Man and Wife." The play was as popular as the Wilkie Collins' story from which it had been taken, and therefore the house was crowded.

I was lying on the bed in the darkened room, in that profound and swift-coming sleep known, alas! only to the stage hero or heroine. The paper on the wall began to move noiselessly aside, and in the opening thus disclosed at the head of the bed, lamp-illumined, appeared the murderous faces of Delamain and Hesther Detheridge.



Clara Morris as "Odette"



Clara Morris and James Parselle in 3d Act of "Miss Multon"

As the latter raised the wet, suffocating napkin that was to be placed over my face, a short, fat man in the balcony started to his feet, and broke the creepy silence with the shout:—

"Mein Gott in Himmel! vill dey murder her alreaty?"

Some one tried to pull him down into his seat, but he struck the hand away, crying loudly, "Stob it! stob it, I say!" And while the people rocked back and forth with laughter, an usher led the excited German out, declaring all the way that "A blay vas a blay, but somedings might be dangerous even in a blay! unt dat ting vat he saw should be stobbed alreaty!" Meantime I had quite a little rest on my bed before quiet could be restored and the play proceed.

I have often wondered if any audience in the world can be as quick to see a point as is the New York audience. During my first season in this city there was a play

on at Mr. Daly's that I was not in, but I was looking on at it.

In one scene there stood a handsome bronze bust on a tall pedestal. From a careless glance I took it to be an Ariadne. At the changing of the scene the pedestal received a blow that toppled it over, and the beautiful "bronze" bust broke into a hundred pieces of white plaster.

The laughter that followed was simply caused by the discovery of a stage trick. The next character coming upon the stage was played by Miss Newton, in private life known as Mrs. Charles Backus, wife of the then famous minstrel. No sooner did she appear upon the stage, not even speaking one line, than the laugh broke forth again, swelled, and grew, until the entire audience joined in one great roar. I expected to see the lady embarrassed, distressed; but not she! After her first startled glance at the house, she looked at the pedestal, and then she, too, laughed, when the audi-

ence gave a hearty round of applause, which she acknowledged.

A scene-hand, noticing my amazed face, said, "You don't see it, do you?"

"No," I answered.

"Well," said he, "did you know who that bust was?"

"Yes," I replied, "I think it was Ariadne."

"Oh, no!" he said, "it was a bust of Bacchus; then, when Mrs. Backus appeared—"

"Oh!" I interrupted. "They all said to themselves: 'Poor Backus is broken all up! Backus has busted!'"

And that was why they laughed; and she saw it and laughed with them, and they saw *that* and applauded her. Well, that's a quick-witted audience—an opinion I still retain.

People are fond of saying, "A woman can't keep a secret." Well, perhaps she doesn't keep her secrets forever; but here's how two women kept a secret for a good

many years, and betrayed it through a scene in a play.

Mr. Daly's treasurer had given tickets to some friends for a performance of "Divorce." They were ladies — mother and daughter. At first greatly pleased, the elder lady soon began to grow nervous, then tearful as the play went on; and her daughter, watching her closely, was about to propose their retirement, when the mother, with clasped hands and tear-blurred eyes, seeing the stealing of my little son by the order of his father, thrilled the audience and terrified her daughter by flinging up her arms and crying wildly: "Don't do it! for God's sake, don't do it! You don't know what agony it means!" and fell fainting against the frightened girl beside her.

Great confusion followed; the ushers, assisted by those seated near, removed the unconscious woman to Mr. Daly's private office; but so greatly had her words affected the people, that when the men on the stage

escaped through the window with the child in their arms, the curtain fell to a volley of hisses.

In the office, as smelling salts, water, and fresh air were brought into requisition, in answer to a question of Mr. Daly's, the treasurer was saying, "She is Mrs. W——, a widow," when a faint voice interrupted, "No — no; I'm no widow!"

The treasurer smiled pityingly, and continued, "I have known her intimately for twelve years, sir; she is the widow of —"

"No — no!" came the now sobbing voice. "No — no! Oh, Daisy, dear, tell him! tell him!"

And the young girl, very white, and trembling visibly, said: "I hope you will forgive us, Mr. W——, but from causeless jealousy my father deserted mother, and — and he stole my little brother, mamma's only son! We have never heard of either of them since. Widowhood seemed a sort of protection to poor mamma, and she has hid-

den behind its veil for sixteen years. She meant no harm. She would have told you before—"

She turned crimson and stopped, but that burning blush told its story plainly; and Mr. Daly busied himself over the pouring of a glass of wine for the robbed mother, while the treasurer in low tones assured Daisy there was nothing to forgive, and gratefully accepted the permission granted him to see the poor things safely home.

Sixteen years' silence is not so bad for a sex who can't keep a secret!



CHAPTER VII

A CASE OF "TRYING IT ON A DOG"

IT was before I came to New York that I one night saw a really fine performance almost ruined by a single interruption. It was a domestic tragedy of English rural life, and one act began with a tableau copied exactly from a popular painting called "Waiting for the Verdict," which was also the title of the play.

The scene gave an exterior view of the building within which the husband and father was being tried for his life on a charge of murder. The trembling old grandsire leaned heavily on his staff; the devoted wife sat wearily by the closed iron gate, with a babe

on her breast, tired but vigilant; a faithful dog stretched himself at her feet, while his shaggy shoulders pillowed the head of the sleeping child, who was the accused man's darling.

The curtain rose on this picture, which was always heartily greeted, and often, so well it told its pathetic story, a second and a third round of applause greeted it before the dialogue began. The manager's little daughter, who did the sleeping child, contracted a cold and was advised not to venture out of the house for a fortnight, so a substitute had to be found, and a fine lot of trouble the stage-manager had. He declared half the children of Columbus had been through his sieve; and there was the trouble — they all went through, there was no one left to act as substitute. But at last he found two promising little girls, sisters they were, and very poor; but the mother vowed her children must be in bed at nine, theatre or no theatre; yes, she

would like to have the money, but she'd do without it rather than have a child out of bed at all hours. At first she held out for nine o'clock, but at last yielded the additional half-hour; and to the great disappointment of the younger child, the elder one was accepted, for the odd reason that she looked so much younger than her sister.

The company had come from Cleveland, and there were the usual slight delays attendant on a first night; but the house was "good"; the star (Mr. Buchanan) was making a fine impression, and the play was evidently a "go." The big picture was looked forward to eagerly, and when it was arranged, we had to admit that the pale, pinched little face of the strange child was more effective as it rested on the dog's shoulder than had been the plump, smiling face of the manager's little one. The curtain went up, the applause followed; those behind the scenes crowded to the "wings" to look on; no one noted that the hands of the clock stood at

9.40; no one heard through the second burst of applause the slam of the stage door behind the very, very small person who entered, and silently peering this way and that, found her stern, avenging way to the stage, and that too-favoured sister basking in the sunlight of public approval.

The grandsire had just lifted his head and was about to deliver his beautiful speech of trust and hope, when he was stricken helpless by the entrance upon the stage of a boldly advancing small person of most amazing appearance. Her thin little legs emerged from the shortest of skirts, while her small body was well pinned up in a great blanket shawl, the point of which trailed fully a quarter of a yard on the floor behind her. She wore a woman's hood on her head, and from its cavernous depth, where there gleamed a pale, malignant small face, a voice issued — the far-reaching voice of a child — that triumphantly commanded: —

"You, Mary Ann, yu're ter get up out of

that an' com' home straight away — an' yu're ter go ter bed, too, — mother says so!" and the small Nemesis turned on her heel and trailed off the stage, followed by laughter that seemed fairly to shake the building. Nor was that all. No sooner had Mary Ann grasped the full meaning of this dread message than she turned over on her face, and scrambling up by all fours, she eluded the restraining hands of the actress-mother and made a hasty exit to perfect shrieks of laughter and storms of applause; while the climax was only reached when the dog, trained to lie still so long as the pressure of the child's head was upon his shoulder, finding himself free, rose, shook himself violently, and trotted off, waving his tail pleasantly as he went.

That finished it; the curtain had to fall, a short overture was played, and the curtain rose again without the complete tableau, and the action of the play was resumed; but several times the laughter was renewed. It

was only necessary for some person to titter over the ludicrous recollection, and instantly the house was laughing with that person. The next night the manager's child, swathed in flannel, with a mouth full of cough-drops, held the well-trained dog in his place until the proper moment for him to rise, and the play went on its way rejoicing.

And just to show how long-lasting is the association of ideas, I will state that years, many years afterward, I met a gentleman who had been in the auditorium that night, and he told me he had never since seen a blanket shawl, whether in store for sale or on some broad back, that he had not instantly laughed outright, always seeing poor Mary Ann's obedient exit after that vengeful small sister with her trailing shawl.



THE CAT IN "CAMILLE"

IT was in "Camille," one Friday night, in Baltimore, that for the only time in my life I wished to wipe an animal out of existence. I love four-footed creatures with extravagant devotion, not merely the finely bred and beautiful ones, but the poor, the sick, the halt, the maimed, the half-breeds or the no breeds at all; and almost all animals quickly make friends with me, divining my love for them. But on this one night — well! it was this way. In the last act, as Camille, I had staggered from the window

to the bureau and was nearing that dread moment when in the looking-glass I was to see the reflection of my wrecked and ruined self. The house was giving strained attention, watching dim-eyed the piteous, weak movements of the dying woman; and right there I heard that (—h !) quick indrawing of the breath startled womanhood always indulges in before either a scream or a laugh. My heart gave a plunge, and I thought: What is it? Oh, what is wrong? and I glanced down at myself anxiously, for really I wore so very little in that scene that if anything should slip off — gracious! I did not know but what, in the interest of public propriety, the law might interfere. But that one swift glance told me that the few garments I had assumed in the dressing-room still faithfully clung to me. But alas! there was the dreaded titter, and it was unmistakably growing. What was it about? They could only laugh at me, for there was no one else on the stage. Was there not, indeed! In an

agony of humiliation I turned half about and found myself facing an absolutely monstrous cat. Starlike he held the very centre of the stage, his two great topaz eyes were fixed roundly and unflinchingly upon my face. On his body and torn ears he carried the marks of many battles. His brindled tail stood straightly and aggressively in the air, and twitched with short, quick twitches, at its very tip, truly as burly an old buccaneer as I ever saw.

No wonder they giggled! But how to save the approaching death scene from total ruin? All was done in a mere moment or two; but several plans were made and rejected during these few moments. Naturally my first thought, and the correct one, was to call back "Nannine," my faithful maid, and tell her to remove the cat. But alas! my Nannine was an unusually dull-witted girl, and she would never be able to do a thing she had not rehearsed. My next impulse was to pick up the creature and carry

it off myself; but I was playing a dying girl, and the people had just seen me, after only three steps, reel helplessly into a chair; and this cat might easily weigh twelve pounds or more; and then at last my plan was formed. I had been clinging all the time to the bureau for support, now I slipped to my knees and with a prayer in my heart that this fierce old Thomas might not decline my acquaintance, I held out my hand, and in a faint voice, called "Puss — Puss — Puss! come here, Puss!"

It was an awful moment: if he refused to come, if he turned tail and ran, all was over; the audience would roar.

"Puss — Puss!" I pleaded. Thomas looked hard at me, hesitated, stretched out his neck, and working his whiskers nervously, sniffed at my hand.

"Puss — Puss!" I gasped out once more, and lo! he gave a little "meow," and walking over to me, arched his back amicably, and rubbed his dingy old body against my

knee. In a moment my arms were about him, my cheek on his wicked old head, and the applause that broke forth from the audience was as balm of Gilead to my distress and mortification. Then I called for Nannine, and when she came on, I said to her, "Take him downstairs, Nannine, he grows too heavy a pet for me these days," and she lifted and carried Sir Thomas from the stage, and so I got out of the scrape without sacrificing my character as a sick woman.

My manager, Mr. John P. Smith, who was a wag, and who would willingly give up his dinner, which he loved, for a joke, which he loved better, was the next day questioned about this incident. One gentleman, a music dealer, said to him: "Mr. Smith, I wish you to settle a question for me. My wife and I are at variance. We saw 'Camille' last night, and my wife, who has seen it several times in New York, insisted that that beautiful little cat-scene belongs to the play

and is always done; while I am sure I never saw it before, and several of my customers agree with me, one lady declaring it to have been an accident. Will you kindly set us right?"

"Certainly," heartily replied Mr. Smith; "your wife is quite right, the cat scene is always done. It is a great favourite with Miss Morris, and she hauls that cat all over the country with her, ugly as he is, just because he's such a good actor."



CHAPTER IX

"ALIXE," THE TRAGEDY OF THE GOOSE GREASE

DURING the run of "Alixe," at Daly's Theatre, I had suffered from a sharp attack of inflammation of the lungs, and before I was well the doctor was simply horrified to learn that Mr. Daly had commanded me to play at the Saturday performance, saying that if the work made me worse, the doctor would have all day Sunday to treat me in. He really seemed to think that using a carriage did away with all possible danger in passing from a warm room, through icy streets, to a draughty theatre. But certain lesions that I carry about with me are proofs of his error. However, I dared not risk losing my engagement, so I obeyed. My chest,

which had been blistered and poulticed during my illness, was excruciatingly tender and very sensitive to cold; and the doctor, desiring to heal, and at the same time to protect it from chill, to my unspeakable mortification anointed me lavishly with goose grease and swathed me in flannel and cotton wadding.

That I had no shape left to me was bad enough; but to be a moving abomination was worse, and of all vile, offensive, and vulgar odours commend me to that of goose grease. With cheeks wet from tears of sheer weakness, I reached the theatre resolved to keep as silent as the grave on the subject of my flamboyant armour of grease and flannel. But the first faint muttering of the coming storm reached me even in my dressing-room, when the theatre maid (I had none of my own yet) entered, and frowningly snapped out: "I'd like to know what's the matter with this room? It never smelled like this before. Just as soon as you go out, Miss

Morris, I'll hunt it over and see what the trouble is."

I had been pale, but at that speech one might have lighted matches at my scarlet face. While in the entrance I had to be wrapped up in a great big shawl, through which the odour could not quite penetrate, so no one suspected me when making kindly inquiries about my health; but when it was thrown off, and in my thin white gown I went on the stage — oh!

In the charming little love scene, as Henri and I sat close, oh, very close together, on the garden seat, and I had to look up at him with wide-eyed admiration, I saw him turn his face aside, wrinkling up his nose, and heard him whisper: "What an infernal smell! What is it?"

I shook my head in seeming ignorance and wondered what was ahead — if this was the beginning. It was a harrowing experience; by the time the second act was on, the whole company was aroused. They were like an

angry swarm of bees. Miss Dietz kept her handkerchief openly to her pretty nose; Miss Morant, in stately dudgeon, demanded that Mr. Daly should be sent for, that he might learn the condition of his theatre, and the dangers his people were subjected to in breathing such poisoned air; while right in the very middle of our best scene, Mr. Louis James, the incorrigible, stopped to whisper, "Can't we move further over and get out of this confounded stench?"

In that act I had to spend much of my time at the piano, with the result that when the curtain fell, the people excitedly declared that awful smell was worst right there, and I had the misery of seeing the prompter carefully looking into the piano and applying his long, sharp nose to its upright interior.

There had been a moment in that act when I thought James Lewis suspected me. I had just taken my seat opposite him at the chess table, when he gave a little jerk at his chair, exclaiming under his breath, "Blast that smell — there it is again!"



Mrs. Gilbert; Augustin Daly; James Lewis; Louis James

I remained silent, and there I was wrong; for Lewis, knowing me well, knew my habit of extravagant speech, and instantly his blue pop eyes were upon my miserable face, with suspicion sticking straight out of them. With trembling hand I made my move at chess, saying, "Queen to Queens rook four," and he added in aside, "Seems to me you're mighty quiet about this scent; I hope you ain't going to tell me you can't smell it?"

But the assurance that "I did — oh, I did, indeed! smell a most outrageous odour," came so swiftly, so convincingly from my lips, that his suspicions were lulled to rest.

The last act came, and — and — well, as I said, it was the last act. White and rigid and lily-strewn, they bore me on the stage, — Louis James at the shoulders and George Clarke at the feet. Their heads were bent over me. James was nearest to the storm centre. Suddenly he gasped, then as we reached the centre of the stage Clarke gave vent to "phew!" They gently laid me on

the sofa, but through the sobs of the audience and of the characters I heard from James the unfinished, half-doubting sentence, "Well, I believe in my soul it's—" But the mother (Miss Morant) approached me then, took my hand, touched my brow, called for help, for a physician; then with the wild cry, "She is dead! she is dead!" flung herself down beside the sofa with her head upon my goose-grease breast. Scarcely had she touched me, however, when with a gasping snort of disgust she sprang back, exclaiming violently, "It's you, you wretch! it's *you!*" and then under cover of other people's speeches, I being dead and helpless, Clarke stood at my head and James at my feet and reviled me, calling me divers unseemly names and mocking at me, while references were made every now and then to chloride of lime and such like disinfectants.

They would probably have made life a burden for me ever after, had I not after the performance lifted tearful eyes to them and

said, "I am so sorry for your discomfort, but you can go out and get fresh air; but, boys, just think of me, I can't get away from myself and my goose-grease smell a single moment, and it's perfectly awful!"

"You bet it is!" they all answered, as with one voice, and they were merciful to me, which did not prevent them from sending the prompter (who did not know of the discovery) with a lantern to search back of the scenes for the cause of the offensive odour. Perhaps I may add that goose grease does not figure in my list of "household remedies."

But the next week I was able, in a measure at least, to heal their wounded feelings. Actresses used to receive a good many little gifts from admirers in the audience. They generally took the form of flowers or candy, but sometimes there came instead a book, a piece of music, or an ornament for the dressing-table; but Alixe's altar could boast an entirely new votive offering. I received a let-

ter and a box. The letter was an outburst of admiration for Alixe, the "lily maid the tender, the poetical," etc. The writer then went on to tell me how she had yearned to express to me her feelings; how she had consulted her husband on the matter, and how he had said certainly to write if she wished, and send some little offering, which seemed appropriate, and "therefore she sent *this*"; and with visions of a copy of Keats or Shelley or a lace-trimmed pin-cushion, I opened the box and found the biggest mince pie I ever saw.

Certainly the lady's idea of an appropriate gift was open to criticism, but not so her pie. That was rich perfection. Its fruity, spicy interior was evenly warmed with an evident old French brandy, — no savagely burning cooking brandy, mind, — and when the flaky marvel had stood upon the heater for a time, even before its cutting up with a paper-knife, the odour of goose grease was lost in the "Araby the Blest" scent of mince meat.



CHAPTER X

J. E. OWENS'S "WANDERING BOYS." "A HOLE IN THE WALL" INCIDENT

THE late John E. Owens, while acting in Cincinnati, had a severe cold. He was feverish, and fearing for his throat, which was apt to give him trouble, he had his physician, an old friend, come to see him back of the scenes. The doctor brought with him an acquaintance, and Mr. Owens asked them to wait till the next act was over to see how his throat was going to behave.

It's always a dangerous thing to turn out-

siders loose behind the scenes; for if they don't fall into traps, or step into paint pots, they are sure to pop on to the stage.

Mr. Owens supposed the gentlemen would stop quietly in his room, but not they. Out they wandered on discovery intent. A well-painted scene caught the doctor's eye. He led his friend up to it, to take a better look; then as only part of it was visible from where they stood, they followed it along.

Mr. Owens and I were on the stage. Suddenly his eyes distended. "What in the devil?" he whispered. I looked behind me, and at the same moment the audience burst into shouts of laughter; for right into the centre of the stage had walked, with backs toward the audience, two tall gentlemen, each with a shining bald head, each tightly buttoned in a long black overcoat, and each gesticulating with a heavy cane.

I whispered to Mr. Owens, "The two Dromios"; but he snapped out, "Two blind old bats."

When they heard the roar behind them, they turned their heads, and then a funnier, wilder exit I never saw than was made by these two dignified old gentlemen; while Owens added to the laughter by taking me by the hand, and when we had assumed their exact attitude, singing "Two wandering boys from Switzerland."

I am reminded that the first performance I ever saw in my life had one of the most grotesque interruptions imaginable. At a sort of country hotel much frequented by driving parties and sleighing parties, a company of players were "strapped," — to use the theatrical term, stranded, — unable either to pay their bills or to move on. There was a ballroom in the house, and the proprietor allowed them to erect a temporary stage there and give a performance, the guests in the house promising to attend in a body.

One of the plays was an old French farce, known to English audiences as "The Hole in the Wall." The principal comedy

part was a clerk to two old misers, who starved him outrageously.

I was a little, stiffly starched person, and I remember that I sat on some one's silk lap, and slipped and slipped, and was hitched up and immediately slipped again until I wished I might fall off and be done with it. Near me sat a little old maiden lady, who had come in from her village shop to see "the show." She wore two small, sausage curls either side of her wrinkled cheeks, large glasses, a broad lace collar, while three members of her departed family gathered together in one fell group on a mighty pin upon her tired chest. She held a small bag on her knee, and from it she now and then slid a bit of cake which, as she nibbled it, gave off a strong odour of caraway seed.

Now the actor was clever in his "make-up," and each time he appeared he looked thinner than he had in the scene before. Instead of laughing, however, the old woman took it seriously, and she had to wipe her glasses



John E. Owens



with her carefully folded handkerchief several times before that last scene, when she was quite overcome.

His catch phrase had been, "Oh! oh! how hungry I am!" and every time he said it, she gave a little involuntary groan; but as he staggered on at the last, thin as a bit of thread paper, hollow-cheeked, white-faced, she indignantly exclaimed, "Well now, *that's* a shame!"

The people laughed aloud; the comedian fixed his eyes upon her face, and with hands pressed against his stomach groaned, "O-h! how hungry I am!" and then she opened that bag and drew forth two long, twisted, fried cakes, rose, stood on her tip-toes, and reaching them up to him tearfully remarked:—

"Here, you poor soul, take these. They are awful dry; but it's all I've got with me."

The audience fairly screamed; but poor and stranded as that company was, the come-

dian was an artist, for he accepted the fried cakes, ate them ravenously to the last crumb, and so kept well within the character he was playing, without hurting the feelings of the kind-hearted, little old woman.

It's pleasant to know that that clever bit of acting attracted the attention and gained the interest of a well-to-do gentleman, who was present, and who next day helped the actors on their way to the city.

A certain foreign actor once smilingly told me "I was a crank about my American public." I took his little gibe in good part; for while he knew foreign audiences, he certainly did *not* know American ones as well as I, who have faced them from ocean to ocean, from British Columbia to Florida. Two characteristics they all share in common, — intelligence and fairness, — otherwise they vary as widely, have as many marked peculiarities, as would so many individuals. New York and Boston are *the* authorities

this side of "the Great Divide," while San Francisco sits in judgment by the blue Pacific.

One never-to-be-forgotten night I went to a fashionable theatre in New York City to see a certain English actress make her début before an American audience, which at that time was considered quite an interesting event, since there were but one or two of her countrywomen over here then. The house was very full; the people were of the brightest and the "smartest." I sat in a stage box and noted their eagerness, their smiling interest.

The curtain was up, there was a little dialogue, and then the stage door opened. I dimly saw the actress spreading out her train ready to "come on," the cue was given, a figure in pale blue and white appeared in the doorway, stood for one single, flashing instant, then lurched forward, and with a crash she measured her full length upon the floor.

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The shocked "O-h-h" that escaped the audience might have come from one pair of lips, so perfect was its spontaneity, and then dead and perfect silence fell.

The actress lay near but one single piece of furniture (she was alone in the scene, unfortunately), and that was one of those frail, useless, gilded trifles known as reception chairs. She reached out her hand, and lifting herself by that, had almost reached her knee, when the chair tipped under her weight, and they both fell together.

It was awful. A deep groan burst from the people in the parquet. I saw many women hide their eyes; men, with hands already raised to applaud, kept the attitude rigidly, while their tight-pressed lips and frowning brows showed an agony of sympathy. Then suddenly an arm was thrust through the doorway; I knew it for the head carpenter's. Though in a shirt sleeve, it was bare to the elbow, and not over clean, but strong as a bough of living oak. She

seized upon it and lifting herself, with scarlet face and neck and breast, she stood once more upon her feet. And then the storm broke loose; peal on peal of thunderous applause shook the house. But four times in my life have I risked throwing flowers myself; but that night mine were the first roses that fell at her feet. She seemed dazed; quite distinctly I heard her say "off" to some one in the entrance, "But what's the matter?"

At last she came forward. She was plump almost to stoutness, but she moved most gracefully. Her bow was greeted with long-continued applause. Sympathy, courtesy, encouragement, welcome — all were expressed in that general and enthusiastic outburst.

"Why," said she after all was over, "at home they would have hissed me, had that happened there."

"Oh!" exclaimed one who heard, "never; they could not be so cruel."

"Oh, yes," she answered, "*afterward*

they might have applauded, but not at first. Surely they would have hissed me."

And with these words ringing in my ears, no wonder that, figuratively speaking, I knelt at the feet of a New York audience and proudly kissed its hand.



STAGE CHILDREN. MY "LITTLE BREECHES" IN "MISS MULTON"

IN the play of "Miss Multon" a number of children are required for the first act. They are fortunately supposed to be the children of the poor, and they come to a Christmas party. As I had that play in my *repertoire* for several years, I naturally came in contact with a great number of little people, and that's just what they generally were, little men and women, with here and there at long intervals a *real* child.

They were of all kinds and qualities, — some well-to-do, some very poor, some gentle and well-mannered, some wild as steers, some

brazen-faced and pushing, some sweet and shy and modest. I had one little child — a mere tot — take hold of the ribbon with which I tied my cape and ask me how much it was a yard; she also inquired about the quality of the narrow lace edge on my handkerchief, and being convinced that it was real, sharply told me to look out "it didn't get stoled." One little girl came every night, as I sat waiting for my cue, to rub her fingers up and down over the velvet collar of my cape. Touching the soft yielding surface seemed to give her exquisite pleasure, and I caught the same child standing behind me when I wore the rich red dress, holding her hands up to it, as to a fire, for warmth. Poor little soul! she had sensibility and imagination both.

The play requires that one child should be very small; and as it was no unusual thing for the little one to get frightened behind the scenes, I used to come to the rescue, and as I found a question about "Mamma" won

their attention the quickest, I fell into the habit of saying, first thing: "Where's mamma? Is she here? Show me, where." And having once won attention, it had gone hard with me indeed had I failed to make friends with the youngster.

One Monday evening as I came to my place, I saw the new baby standing all forlorn, with apparently no one at all to look after her, not even one of the larger children. She was evidently on the very verge of frightened tears, and from old habit I stooped down and said to her, "Where's mamma, dear?"

She lifted two startled blue eyes to my face and her lips began to tremble. I went on, "Is mamma here?" The whole little face drew up in a distressed pucker, and with gasps she whispered, "She's in er box."

I raised my head and glanced across the stage. An old gentleman sat in the box opposite, and I knew a merry young party had the one on our own side, so I answered:

"Oh, no, dear, mamma's not in the box; she's —" when the poor baby cried, "Yes, she is, my mamma's in a box!" and buried her curly head in the folds of my skirt and burst into sobs.

At that moment a hard-voiced, hard-faced, self-sufficient girl pushed forward, and explained in a patronizing way: "Oh, she's too little to say it right. She ain't got no mother; she's dead, and it's the coffin Annie means by the box."

Oh, poor baby, left behind! poor little scrap of humanity!

In another city the child was older, nearly five, but so very small that she did nicely in the tiny trousers (it is a boy's part, as I should have said before), and when the act was over, I kissed the brightly pretty face and offered her a little gift. She put out her hand eagerly, then swiftly drew it back again, saying, "It's money."

"Yes," I answered. "It's for you, take it."



"Little Breeches"

She hung her head and murmured, "It's money, I dar'sent."

"Why not?" I asked.

"'Cause we're too poor," she replied, which was certainly the oddest reason I ever heard advanced for not accepting offered money. I was compelled to hurry to my dressing-room to prepare for the next act; but I saw with what disappointed eyes she followed me, and as I kept thinking of her and her queer answer I told my maid to go out and see if the pretty, very clean little girl was still there, and, if so, to send her to my room. Presently a faint tap, low down on the door, told me my expected visitor had arrived. Wide-eyed and smiling she entered, and having some cough drops on my dressing-table, I did the honours. Cough drops of strength and potency they were, too, but sweet, and therefore acceptable to a small girl. She looked at them in her wistful way, and then very prettily asked, "Please might she eat one right then?"

I consented to that seemingly grave breach of etiquette, and then asked if her mother was with her.

"Oh, no! Sam had brought her." (Sam was the gas man.)

"Why," I went on, "did you not take that money, dear?" (her eyes instantly became regretful). "Don't you want it?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am," she eagerly answered. "Yes, ma'am, I want it, thank you; but you see I might get smacked again — like I did last week."

Our conversation at this embarrassing point was interrupted by the appearance of Sam, who came for the little one. I sent her out with a message for the maid, and then questioned Sam, who, red and apologetic, explained that "the child had never seen no theatre before; but he knew that the fifty cents would be a godsend to them all, and an honest earned fifty cents, too, and he hoped the kid hadn't given me no trouble," and he beamed when I said she was charming and so well-mannered.

"Yes," he reckoned, "they aimed to bring her up right. Yer see," he went on, "her father's my pal, and he married the girl that —a girl—well, the best kind of a girl yer can think of" (poor Sam), "and they both worked hard and was gettin' along fine, until sickness come, and then he lost his job, and it's plumb four months now that he's been idle; and that girl, the wife, was thin as a rail, and they would die all together in a heap before they'd let any one help 'em except with work."

"What," I asked, "did the child mean by getting a smacking last week?"

"Oh," he answered, "the kid gets pretty hungry, I suppose, and t'other day when she was playin' with the Jones child, there in the same house, Mrs. Jones asks her to come in and have some dinner; and as she lifted one of the covers from the cooking-stove, the kid says: 'My, you must be awful rich, you make a fire at both ends of your stove at once. My mamma only makes a fire

under just one hole, 'cause we don't have anything much to cook now 'cept tea.' The speech reached the mother's ears, and she smacked the child for lettin' on to any one how poor they are. Lord, no, Miss, she dar'sent take no money, though God knows they need it bad enough."

With dim eyes I hurriedly scribbled a line on a bit of wrapping paper, saying: —

"This little girl has played her part so nicely that I want her to have something to remember the occasion by, and since I shall not be in the city to-morrow, and cannot select anything myself, I must ask you to act for me." Then I folded it about a green note, and calling back the child, I turned her about and pinned both written message and money to the back of her apron. The little creature understood the whole thing in a flash. She danced about joyously: "Oh, Sam," she cried, "the lady's gived me a present, and I can't help myself, can I?"

And Sam wiped his hand on his breeches leg, and, clearing his throat hard, asked "if I'd mind shakin' hands?"

And I didn't mind it a bit. Then, with clumsy care, he wrapped the child in her thin bit of a cape, and led her back to that home which gave lodgement to both poverty and pride.

While the play was new, in the very first engagement outside of New York, I had a very little child for that scene. She was flaxen blond, and her mother had dressed her in bright sky-blue, which was in itself an odd colour for a little boy to wear. Then the small breeches were so evidently mother-made, the tiny bits of legs surmounted with such an enormous breadth of seat, the wee Dutch-looking blue jacket, and the queer blue cap on top of the flaxen curls, gave the little creature the appearance of a Dutch doll. The first sight of her, or, perhaps, I should say "him," the first sight of him provoked a ripple of merriment; but when

he turned full about on his bits of legs and toddled up stage, giving a full, perfect view of those trousers to a keenly observant public, people laughed the tears into their eyes. And this baby noted the laughter, and resented it with a thrust-out lip and a frowning knit of his level brows that was funnier than even his blue clothing — and after that one Parthian glance at the audience, he invariably toddled to me, and hid his face in my dress. From the very first night the child was called "Little Breeches," and to this day I know her by no other name.

Time passed by fast — so fast; years came, years went. "Miss Multon" had been lying by for a number of seasons. "Renée de Moray," "Odette," "Raymonde," etc., had been in use; then some one asked for "Miss Multon," and she rose obediently from her trunk, took her manuscript from the shelf, and presented herself at command. One evening, in a Southern California city, as I left my room ready for the first act of this

play, the door-man told me a young woman had coaxed so hard to see me, for just one moment, that ignoring orders he had come to ask me if he might bring her in; she was not begging for anything, just a moment's interview. Rather wearily I gave permission, and in a few moments I saw him directing her toward me. A very slender, very young bit of a woman, a mere girl, in fact, though she held in her arms a small white bundle. As she came smilingly up to me, I perceived that she was very blond. I bowed and said "Good evening" to her, but she kept looking in smiling silence at me for a moment or two, then said eagerly, "Don't you know me, Miss Morris?"

I looked hard at her. "No," I said; "and if I have met you before, it's strange, for while I cannot remember names, my memory for faces is remarkable."

"Oh," she said, in deep disappointment, "can't you remember me at all — not at all?"

Her face fell, she pushed out her nether lip, she knit her level, flaxen brows.

I leaned forward suddenly and touched her hand, saying, "You are not — you can't be — my little — "

"Yes, I am," she answered delightedly. "I am Little Breeches."

"And this?" I asked, touching the white bundle.

"Oh," she cried, "this is *my* Little Breeches; but I shan't dress him in bright blue."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed, "how old are you, and how old am I?"

"Well," she replied, "I'm almost eighteen, and as you look just exactly as you did when I saw you last, it doesn't matter, so far as I can see, how many years have passed." (Oh, clever Little Breeches!)

Then, having had Little Breeches 2d kissed and honestly admired, she trotted away satisfied; and only as I made my entrance on the stage did it occur to me that I had not asked her name; so she ends as she began, simply Little Breeches.



CHAPTER XII

THE STAGE AS AN OCCUPATION FOR WOMEN

IN looking over my letters from the gentle "Unknown," I find that the question, "What advantage has the stage over other occupations for women?" is asked by a Mrs. Some One more often than by the more impulsive and less thoughtful girl writer, and it is put with frequency and earnestness.

Of course there is nothing authoritative in these answers of mine, nothing absolute. They are simply the opinion of one woman, founded upon personal experience and obser-

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vation. We must, of course, to begin with, eliminate the glamour of the stage—that strange, false lustre, as powerful as it is intangible—and consider acting as a practical occupation, like any other. And then I find that in trying to answer the question asked, I am compelled, after all, to turn to a memory.

I had been on the stage two years when one day I met a schoolmate. Her father had died, and she, too, was working; but she was bitterly envious of my occupation. I earnestly explained the demands stage wardrobe made upon the extra pay I drew; that in actual fact she had more money for herself than I had. Again I explained that rehearsals, study, and preparation of costumes required time almost equal to her working hours, with the night work besides; but she would not be convinced.

"Oh, don't you see," she cried, "I am at service, that means I'm a dependant, I labour for another. You serve, yes, but you

labour for yourself," and lo! she had placed her stubby little finger upon the sore spot in the working-woman's very heart, when she had divined that in the independence of an actress lay her great advantage over other workers.

Of course this independence is not absolute; but then how many men there are already silver-haired at desk or bench or counter who are still under the authority of an employer! Like these men, the actress's independence is comparative; but measured by the bondage of other working-women, it is very great. We both have duties to perform for which we receive a given wage, yet there is a difference. The working-girl is expected to be subservient, she is too often regarded as a menial, she is ordered. An actress, even of small characters, is considered a necessary part of the whole. She assists, she attends, she obliges. Truly a difference.

Again, women shrink with passionate re-

pugnance from receiving orders from another woman; witness the rarity of the American domestic. A pity? Yes; but what else can you expect? The Americans are a dominant race. Free education has made all classes too nearly equal for one woman to bend her neck willingly and accept the yoke of servitude offered by another woman.

And even this is spared to the actress, since her directions are more often received from the stage manager or manager than from a woman star. True, her life is hard, she has no home comforts; but, then, she has no heavy duties to perform, no housework, bed-making, sweeping, dish-washing, or clothes-washing, and when her work is done, she is her own mistress. She goes and comes at her own will; she has time for self-improvement, but best of all she has something to look forward to. That is a great advantage over girls of other occupations, who have such a small chance of advancement.

Some impetuous young reader who speaks

first and thinks afterward may cry out that I am not doing justice to the profession of acting, even that I discredit it in thus comparing it with humble and somewhat mechanical vocations; so before I go farther, little enthusiasts, let me remind you of the wording of this present query. It does not ask what advantage has acting over other professions, over other arts, but "What advantage has it over other occupations for women?"

A very sweeping inquiry, you see; hence this necessary comparison with shop, factory, and office work. As to the other professions, taking, for instance, law or medicine, preparations for practice must be very costly. A girl puts her family to a great strain to pay her college expenses, or if some family friend advances funds, when she finally passes all the dreaded examinations, and has the legal right to hang out her shingle, she starts in the race of life handicapped with crushing debts.

The theatre is, I think, the only place where a salary is paid to students during all the time they are learning their profession; surely a great, a wonderful advantage over other professions to be self-sustaining from the first.

Then the arts, but ah! life is short and art, dear Lord, art is long, almost unto eternity. And she who serves it needs help, much help, and then must wait, long and wearily, for the world's response and recognition, that, even if they come, are apt to be somewhat uncertain, unless they can be cut on a marble tomb; then they are quite positive and hearty. But in the art of acting the response and recognition come swift as lightning, sweet as nectar, while you are young enough to enjoy and to make still greater efforts to improve and advance.

So it seems to me the great advantage of acting over work is one's independence, one's opportunity to improve oneself. Its advantage over the professions is that it is self-

sustaining from the start. Its advantage over the arts is its swift reward for earnest endeavour.

It must be very hard to endure the contempt so often bestowed upon the woman who simply serves. I had a little taste of it once myself; and though it was given me by accident, and apologies and laughter followed, I remember quite well that even that tiny taste was distinctly unpleasant — yes, and bitter. I was abroad with some very intimate friends, and Mrs. P——, an invalid, owing to a mishap, was for some days without a maid. We arrived in Paris hours behind time, late at night, and went straight to our reserved rooms, seeing no one but some sleepy servants.

Early next morning, going to my friends' apartments, I came upon this piteous sight: Mrs. P——, who had a head of curly hair, was not only without a maid, but also without the use of her right arm. The fame of Charcot had brought her to Paris. Unless she break-

fasted alone, which she hated, her hair must be arranged. Behold, then, the emergency for which her husband, Colonel P——, had, boldly not to say recklessly, offered his services.

I can see them now. She, with clenched teeth of physical suffering and uplifted eye of the forgiving martyr, sat in combing jacket before him; and he, with the maid's white apron girt tight about him just beneath his armpits, had on his soldierly face an expression of desperate resolve that suggested the leading of a forlorn hope. A row of hair-pins protruded sharply from between his tightly closed lips; a tortoise-shell back-comb, dangling from one side of his full beard where he placed it for safety, made this amateur hairdresser a disturbing sight both for gods and men.

With legs well braced and far apart, his arms high lifted like outspread wings, he wielded the comb after the manner of a man raking hay. For one moment all my sym-

pathy was for the shrinking woman; then, when suddenly, in despite of the delicious morning coolness, a great drop of perspiration splashed from the Colonel's corrugated brow, down into the obstreperous curly mass he wrestled with, I pitied him, too, and cried:—

"Oh, I'll do that. Take care, you'll swallow a pin or two if you contradict me. Your spirit is willing, Colonel, but your flesh, for all you have such a lot of it, is weak, when you come to hair-dressing!"

And regardless of his very earnest protest, I took the tangled, tormented mass in hand and soon had it waving back into a fluffy knot; and just as I was drawing forth some short locks for the forehead, there came a knock and in bounced the mistress of the house, our landlady, Mme. F——, who, missing our arrival the night before, came now to bid us welcome and inquire as to our satisfaction with arrangements, etc. She was a short woman, of surprising breadth and more sur-

prising velocity of speech. She could pronounce more words to a single breath than any other person I have ever met. She was German by birth, and spoke French with a strong German accent, while her English was a thing to wring the soul, sprinkled as it was with German "unds," "ufs," and "yousts," and French "zees" and "zats." Our French being of the slow and precise kind, and her English of the rattling and at first incomprehensible type, the conversation was somewhat confused. But even so, my friends noticed with surprise, that Madame did not address one word of welcome to me. They hastened to introduce me, using my married name.

A momentary annoyance came into her face, then she dropped her lids haughtily, swept me from head to foot with one contemptuous glance, and without even the faintest nod in return to my "Bon jour, Madame," she turned to Mrs. P——, who, red with indignation, was trying to sputter

out a demand for an explanation, and asked swiftly: —

"Und zat ozzer lady? you vas to be t'ree — n'est-ce pas? She hav' not com' yed? to-morrow, perhaps, und — und" (I saw what was coming, but my companions suspected nothing), "und" — she dropped her lids again and indicated me with a contemptuous movement of the head — "she, zat maid, you vant to make arrange for her? You hav' not write for room for zat maid?"

I leaned from the window to hide my laughter, for it seemed to me that Colonel P—— jumped a foot, while the cry of his wife drowned the sound of the short, warm word that is of great comfort to angry men. Before they could advance one word of explanation, an aproned waiter fairly burst into the room, crying for "Madame! Madame! to come quick, for that Jules was at it very bad again!" And she wildly rushed out, saying over her shoulder, "By und by we zee for zat maid, und about zat udder lady, by

und by also," and so departed at a run with a great rattling of starch and fluttering of cap ribbons; for Jules, the head cook, already in the first stages of delirium tremens, was making himself interesting to the guests by trying to jump into the fountain basin to save the lives of the tiny ducklings, who were happily swimming there, and Madame F—— was sorely needed.

Yes, I laughed—laughed honestly at the helpless wrath of my friends, and pretended to laugh at the mistake; but all the time I was saying to myself, "Had I really been acting as maid, how cruelly I should have suffered under that contemptuous glance and from that withheld bow of recognition." She had found me well-dressed, intelligent, and well-mannered; yet she had insulted me, because she believed me to be a lady's maid. No wonder women find service bitter.

We had retired from the breakfast room and were arranging our plans for the day, when a sort of whirlwind came rushing

through the hall, the door sprang open almost without a pronounced permission, and Madame F—— flung herself into the room, caught my hands in hers, pressed them to her heart, to her lips, to her brow, wept in German, in French, in English, and called distractedly upon "Himmel!" "Ciel!" and "Heaven!" But she found her apologies so coldly received by my friends that she was glad to turn the flood of her remorse in my direction, and for very shame of the scene she was making I assured her the mistake was quite pardonable—as it was. It was her manner that was almost unpardonable. Then she added to my discomfort by bursting out with fulsome praise of me as an actress; how she had seen me and wept, and so on and on, she being only at last walked and talked gently out of the room.

But that was not the end of her remorse. A truly French bouquet with its white paper petticoat arrived in about an hour, "From the so madly mistooken Madame F——," the

card read, and that act of penance was performed every morning as long as I remained in Paris. But one day she appealed to the Colonel for pity and sympathy.

"Ah!" said she, "I hav' zee two tr'ubles, zee two sorrows! I hav' zee grief to vound zee feelin's of zat so fine actrice Americaine —zat ees one tr'ubles, und den I hav' zee shame to mak' zat grande fool meestak'— oh, mon Dieu! I tak' her for zee maid, und zare my most great tr'uble come in! I hav' no one with zee right to keek me — to keek me hard from zee back for being such a fool. I say mit my husband dat night, 'Vill you keek me hard, if you pleas'?' Mais, he cannot, he hav' zee gout in zee grande toe, und he can't keek vurth one sou!— und zat is my second tr'uble!"

Behind her broad back the Colonel confessed that had she expressed such a wish on the occasion of the mistake, he would willingly have obliged her, as he was quite free from gout.

So any woman who goes forth to win her living as an actress will at least be spared the contemptuous treatment bestowed on me in my short service as an amateur lady's maid.



THE BANE OF THE YOUNG ACTRESS'S LIFE

WHAT is the bane of a young actress's life?

Under the protection of pretty seals stamped in various tints of wax, I find one question appearing in many slightly different forms. A large number of writers ask, "What is the greatest difficulty a young actress has to surmount?" In another pile of notes the question appears in this guise, "What is the principal obstacle in the way of the young actress?" While two motherly bodies ask, "What one thing worries an actress the most?" After due thought I have cast them all together, boiled them down, and reduced them to this, "What is the bane of a

young actress's life?" which question I can answer without going into training, with one hand tied behind me, and both eyes bandaged, answer in one word—*dress*. Ever since that far-away season when Eve, the beautiful, inquiring, let-me-see-for-myself Eve, made fig leaves popular in Eden, and invented the apron to fill a newly felt want, dress has been at once the comfort and the torment of woman.

Acting is a matter of pretence, and she who can best pretend a splendid passion, a tender love, or a murderous hate, is admittedly the finest actress. Time was when stage wardrobe was a pretence, too. An actress was expected to please the eye, she was expected to be historically correct as to the shape and style of her costume; but no one expected her queenly robes to be of silk velvet, her imperial ermine to be anything rarer than rabbit-skin. My own earliest ermine was humbler still, being constructed of the very democratic white canton

flannel turned wrong side out, while the ermine's characteristic little black tails were formed by short bits of round shoe-lacing. The only advantage I can honestly claim for this domestic ermine is its freedom from the moths, who dearly love imported garments of soft fine cloth and rare lining. I have had and have seen others have, in the old days, really gorgeous brocades made by cutting out great bunches of flowers from chintz and applying them to a cheaper background, and then picking out the high lights with embroidery silk, the effect being not only beautiful, but rich. All these make-believes were necessary then, on a $30 or $35 a week salary, for a leading lady drew no more.

But times are changed, stage lighting is better, stronger. The opera glass is almost universally used, deceptions would be more easily discovered; and more, oh, so much more is expected from the actress of to-day. Formerly she was required, first of all, to sink her own individuality in that of the



Clara Morris as "Jane Eyre"

woman she pretended to be; and next, if it was a dramatized novel she was acting in, she was to make herself look as nearly like the described heroine as possible; otherwise she had simply to make herself as pretty as she knew how in her own way, that was all. But now the actresses of a great city are supposed to set the fashion for the coming season. They almost literally dress in the style of to-morrow: thus the cult of clothes becomes harmful to the actress. Precious time that should be given to the minute study, the final polishing of a difficult character, is used instead in deciding the pitch of a skirt, the width of a collar, or open sleeve-strap, or no sleeve at all.

Some ladies of my acquaintance who had been to the theatre three times, avowedly to study as models the costumes, when questioned as to the play, looked at one another and then answered vaguely: "The performance? Oh, nothing remarkable! It was fair enough; but the dresses! They are

really beyond anything in town, and must have cost a mint of money!"

So we have got around to the opposite of the old-time aim, when the answer might possibly have been: "The acting was beyond anything in town. The dresses? Nothing remarkable! Oh, well, fair enough!"

I have often been told by famous women of the past that the beautiful Mrs. Russell, then of Wallack's Theatre, was the originator in this country of richly elegant realism in stage costuming. When it was known that the mere linings of her gowns cost more than the outside of other dresses; that all her velvet was silk velvet; all her lace to the last inch was real lace; that no wired nor spliced feathers curled about her splendid leghorns, only magnificent single plumes, each worth weeks of salary, this handsome woman, superbly clad, created a sensation, but alas! at the same time, she unconsciously scattered seed behind her that

sprang up into a fine crop of dragon's teeth for following young actresses to gather. *Qui donne le menu, donne la faim!* And right here let me say, I am not of those who believe the past holds a monopoly of all good things. I have much satisfaction in the present, and a strong and an abiding faith in the future, and even in this matter of dress, which has become such an anxiety to the young actress, I would not ask to go back to those days of primitive costuming. In Shakespere's day there appeared over a "drop," or curtain of green, a legend plainly stating, "This is a street in Verona," and every man with an imagination straightway saw the Veronese street to his complete satisfaction; but there were those who had no imagination, and to hold their attention and to keep their patronage, scenes had to be painted for them. One would not like to see a woman draped in plain grey with an attached placard saying, "This is a ball gown" or "This is a Coronation robe," the

imagination would balk at it. But there is a far cry between that and the real Coronation robe of velvet, fur, and jewels. What I would ask for is moderation, and above all freedom for the actress from the burden of senseless extravagance which is being bound upon her shoulders — not by the public, not even by the manager, but by the mischievous small hands of sister actresses, who have private means outside of their salaries. How generous they would be if they could be content to dress with grace and elegance while omitting the mad extravagance that those who are dependent upon their salaries alone will surely try to emulate, and sometimes at what a price, dear Heaven, at what a price!

Let us say an actress plays the part of a woman of fashion — of rank. As she makes her first appearance, she is supposed to have returned from the opera. Therefore, though she may wear them but one moment, hood and opera cloak are needed because they will help out the illusion. Suppose, then,

she wears a long cloak of velvet or cloth, with a lining of delicate tinted quilted satin or fur; if the impression of warmth or elegance and comfort is given, its work has been well done. But suppose the actress enters in an opera cloak of such gorgeous material that the elaborate embroidery on it seems an impertinence — a creation lined with the frailest, most expensive fur known to commerce, frothing with real lace, dripping with semi-precious jewels — what happens? The cloak pushes forward and takes precedence of the wearer, a buzz arises, heads bob this way and that, opera-glasses are turned upon the wonderful cloak whose magnificence has destroyed the illusion of the play; and while its beauty and probable price are whispered over, the scene is lost, and ten to one the actress is oftener thought of as Miss So-and-So, owner of that wonderful cloak, than as Madame Such-an-One, heroine of the drama.

Extravagance is inartistic — so for that

reason I could wish for moderation in stage dressing. Heavens, what a nightmare dress used to be to me! For months I would be paying so much a week to my dressmaker for the gowns of a play. I thought my heart would break to pieces, when, during the long run of "Divorce," just as I had finished paying for five dresses, Mr. Daly announced that we were all to appear in new costumes for the one hundredth night. I pleaded, argued, too, excitedly, that my gowns were without a spot or stain; that they had been made by the dressmaker he had himself selected, and he had approved of them, etc., and he made answer, "Yes, yes, I know all that; but I want to stir up fresh interest, therefore we must have something to draw the people, and they will come to see the new dresses."

And then, in helpless wrath, I burst out with: "Oh, of course! If we are acting simply as dress and cloak models in the Fifth Avenue show room, I can't object

any longer. You see, I was under the impression people came here to see us act your play, not to study our clothes; forgive me my error."

For which I distinctly deserved a forfeit; but we were far past our unfriendly days, and I received nothing worse than a stern, "I am surprised at you, Miss Morris," and at my rueful response, "Yes, so am I surprised at Miss Morris," he laughed outright and pushed me toward the open door, bidding me hurry over to the dressmaker's. I had a partial revenge, however, for one of the plates he insisted on having copied for me turned out so hideously unbecoming that the dress was retired after one night's wear, and he made himself responsible for the bill.

Sometimes a girl loses her chance at a small part that it is known she could do nicely, because some other girl can outdress her — that is very bitter. Then, again, so many plays now are of the present day, and

when the terribly expensive garment is procured it cannot be worn for more than that one play, and next season it is out of date. When the simplest fashionable gown costs $125, what must a ball gown with cloak, gloves, fan, slippers and all, come to? There was a time when the comic artists joked about "the $10 best hat for wives." The shop that carried $10 best hats to-day would be mobbed; $20 and $30 are quite ordinary prices now.

So the young actress — unless she has some little means, aside from a salary, a father and mother to visit through the idle months and so eke that salary out — is bound to be tormented by the question of clothes; for she is human, and wants to look as well as those about her, and besides she knows the stage manager is not likely to seek out the poorest dresser for advancement when an opening occurs.

Recently some actresses whose acknowledged ability as artists should, I think,

have lifted them above such display, allowed their very charming pictures to appear in a public print, with these headings, "Miss B. in her $500 dinner dress"; "Miss R. in her $1000 cloak"; "Miss J. in her $200 tea gown," and then later there appeared elsewhere, "Miss M.'s $100 parasol."

Now had these pictures been given to illustrate the surpassing grace or beauty or novelty of the gowns, the act might have appeared a gracious one, a sort of friendly "tip" on the newest things out; but those flaunting price tags lowered it all. In this period of prosperity a spirit of mad extravagance is abroad in the land. Luxuries have become necessities, fine feeling is blunted, consideration for others is forgotten. Those who published the figures and prices of their clothes were good women, as well as brilliant artists, who would be deeply pained if any act of theirs should fill some sister's heart with bitter envy and

fatal emulation, being driven on to competition by the mistaken belief that the fine dresses had made the success of their owners. Oh, for a little moderation, a little consideration for the under girl, in the struggle for clothes!

In old times of costume plays the manager furnished most of the wardrobe for the men (oh, lucky men!), who provided but their own tights and shoes; and judging from the extreme beauty and richness of the costumes of the New York plays of to-day, and the fact that a lady of exquisite taste designs wholesale, as one might say, all the dresses for production after production, it would seem that the management must share the heavy expenses of such costuming, or else salaries are very much higher than they were a few years ago.

In France the stage, no doubt, partly fills the place of the departed court in presenting new fashions to the public eye, doing it with the graceful aplomb that

has carried many a doubtful innovation on to sure success. Those beautiful and trained artists take pleasure in first presenting the style other women are to follow, and yet they share the honour (?) with another class, whose most audacious follies in dress, while studied from the corner of a downcast eye, are nevertheless often slavishly followed.

How many of the thousands of women, who years ago wore the large, flaring back, felt hat, knew they were following the whim of a woman known to the half-world as Cora Pearl? Not pretty, but of a very beautiful figure, and English by birth, she was, one might say, of course, a good horse-woman. She banqueted late one night — so late that dawn was greying the windows and the sodden faces of her guests when they began to take leave. She had indulged in too much wine for comfort; her head was hot. She was seized with one of the wild whims of her lawless class

—she would mount then and there and ride in the Bois. Remonstrances chilled her whim to iron will. Horses were sent for, her maid aroused. She flung on her habit, and held her hand out for her chapeau. There was none.

"Mademoiselle should recall the new riding hat had been too small, had been returned for blocking."

"Tres bien, le vieux donc, vite!"

"Oh, mon Dieu, il fut donné." A quick blow stopped further explanation.

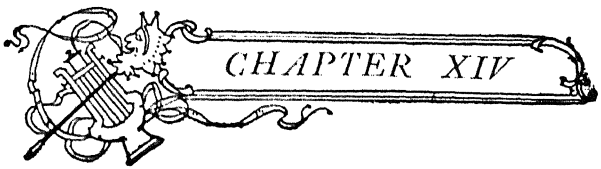
"Quelle que cruche, que cette fille," then a moment's silence, a roving about of the small hot eyes, and with a bound she tore from an American artist's hand his big soft felt hat. Turning the flapping brim up, she fastened it to the crown in three places with jewelled pins, tore a bunch of velvet from her dinner corsage, secured it directly in front, and clapping the hat on the back of her head, dashed downstairs and was in the saddle with a scrabble

and a bound, and away like mad, followed by two men, who were her unwilling companions. Riding longer than she had intended, she returned in broad daylight. All Paris was agog over her odd head gear. Her impudent, laughing face caught their fancy yet again, and she trotted down from the Arc de Triomphe between two rippling little streams of comment and admiration, with, "Comme elle est belle!" "Quelle aplomb!" "Matin, quelle chic!" "Elle est forte gentille!" "C'est le coup de grace!" "Le chapeau! le chapeau!" "La belle Pearl! la belle Pearl!" reaching her distinctly at every other moment.

And that was the origin of the back-turned, broad-brimmed hat that had such vogue before the arrival of the Gainsborough or picture hat.

If I were a young actress, I would rather be noted for acting than for originating a new style of garment; but it is a free country, thank God, and a big one, with

room for all of us, whatever our preferences. And though the young actress has the clothes question heavy on her mind now, and finds it hard to keep up with others and at the same time out of debt, she has the right to hope that by and by she will be so good an actress, and so valuable to the theatre, that a fat salary will make the clothes matter play second fiddle, as is right and proper it should, to the question of fine acting.



THE MASHER, AND WHY HE EXISTS

THOUSANDS of persons who do not themselves use slang understand and even appreciate it. The American brand is generally pithy, compact, and expressive, and not always vulgar. Slang is at its worst in contemptuous epithets, and of those the one that is lowest and most offensive seems likely to become a permanent, recognized addition to the language. No more vulgar term exists than "masher," and it is a distinct comfort to find Webster ascribing the

origin of the word to England's reckless fun-maker, — *Punch.*

Beaux, bucks, lady-killers, Johnnies, — all these terms have been applied at different periods to the self-proclaimed fascinator of women, and to-day we will use some one, any of them, rather than that abomination, — masher. Nor am I "puttin' on scallops and frills," as the boys say. I know a good thing when I hear it, as when a very much overdressed woman entered a car, and its first sudden jerk broke her gorgeous parasol, while its second flung her into the arms of the ugliest, fattest man present and whirled her pocket-book out of the window, I knew that the voice of conviction that slowly said, "Well, she is up against it," slangily expressed the unfortunate woman's exact predicament. Oh, no, I'm not "puttin' on frills," I am only objecting with all my might and main to a term, as well as to the contemptible creature indicated by it, — masher.

In a certain school, long ago, there was a very gentle, tender-hearted teacher, who was also the comforter and peacemaker of her flock. Whenever there was trouble at recess, and some one pushed or some one else had their gathers torn out, or, in actual war, names were called, and "mean thing" and "tattle-tale" brought sobbing little maids to the teacher's arms, or when loss and disaster in the way of missing blocks of rubber, broken slate pencils, or ink-stained reader covers sent floods of tears down small faces, this teacher always came to the rescue and soothed and patted and invariably wound up with these exact words, "There, there, don't let us say anything more about it, and then we'll all be quite happy." I am sure we all thought that it was the eleventh commandment, "Not to say anything more about it."

Now every one of us suffered more or less from our encounters with the multiplication table. Of course *fives* and *tens* were at a

premium — even very stupid little girls could get through them, and *twos* were not so bad, but the rest of the tables were tear-washed daily. *Sevens* were, however, my own especial nightmare — even to this day my fingers instinctively begin to move when I multiply any figure by seven. Standing in class on the platform, the *sevens* one day fell to me. Being charged to put my hands before me, that I should not by chance forget and count by their aid, I staggered and reeled through the table so far as seven times seven, when, moistening my lips, I hoarsely whispered, "Forty-nine," and the shock of finding the answer correct destroyed me utterly. Seven times eight was anything they liked in figures, and so I recklessly cried out, "Oh, sixty-two, I guess," and burst into tears. Recess came, and I would not move from my desk; and then the teacher dried my tears on her own cool, sweet handkerchief, and was comforting me as best she could, when suddenly I stole her

thunder by pressing my damp cheek to hers and saying eagerly, "Don't let us say anything more about the *sevens,* Miss Sands, and then we'll all be quite happy."

Poor little tots! Poor multiplication table! and now, oh, how I would like to cry, "Don't let us say anything more about the masher, and then we'll all be quite happy;" but to calm the needless fears of many, let me say at once, the creature is a nuisance, but not a danger. The stealthy, crafty, determined pursuer of the young and honest actress is a product of the imagination. These "Johnnies" who hang about stage doors and send foolish and impertinent notes to the girlhood of the stage are not in love — they are actuated by vanity, pure and simple. These young "taddies," with hair carefully plastered down, are as like one another as are the peas of one pod, — each wishes to be considered a very devil of a fellow; but how can that be unless he is recognized as a fascinator of women, a masher;

and the quickest way to obtain that reputation is to be seen supping or driving with pretty actresses.

One of the odd things of the professional life is that in the artistic sense you are not considered an "actress" until you have shown some merit, have done some good, honest work; but for the purposes of gossip or scandal, ballet girls, chorus girls, or figurantes become actresses full fledged. Mammas and aunties of would-be young artists seem to have made a veritable bogy-man of this would-be lady-killer. What nonsense! Any well-brought-up young woman, respecting the proprieties, can protect herself from the attentions of this walking impertinence. Letters are his chief weapon. If they are signed, it is easy to return them, if one cares to take so much trouble. A gift would be returned; if sent without a signature, it need not be shown nor worn. If the creature presumes to hang about the stage door, a word of complaint to the manager will be

sufficient; the "masher" will at once "take notice" of some other door and probably of some other actress. But I am asked, Why does he exist? And I suppose he could not if he were not encouraged, and there does exist a certain body of girls who think it great fun to get a jolly supper or a ride to the races out of the Johnny's pocket-book. Wait, now; please don't jump instantly to the conclusion that these chorus or ballet girls are thoroughly bad because they smash to smithereens the conventional laws regulating the conduct of society girls. Most of them, on the contrary, are honest and, knowing how to take care of themselves, will risk hearing a few impudent, wounding words rather than lose one hour of merriment their youth craves. Of course this is not as it should be, but these girls are pretty; life has been hard; delicate sensibilities have not been cultivated in them. Before we harshly condemn, let us first bow to that rough honesty that will

defend itself, if need be, with a blow. A refined girl would never put herself in a position requiring such drastic measures; but it is, I think, to these reckless young wretches, and a few silly, sentimental simpletons who permit themselves to be drawn into a mawkish correspondence with perfect strangers, that we really owe the continued existence of the stage-door "masher," who wishes to be mistaken for a member of the *jeunesse dorée.*

But the mammas and the aunties may feel perfectly safe for another reason. The earnest, ambitious young gentlewoman you are watching over is not often attractive to the "masher." The clever and promising artist, Miss G——, is not his style. He is not looking for brains, "don't yer know." He fancies No. 3 in the second row, she with the flashing eyes and teeth; or No. 7 in the front row, that has the cutest kick in the whole crowd. And his cheap and common letters of fulsome compliment and

invitation go to her accordingly. But the daring little free lance who accepts these attentions pays a high price for the bit of supper that is followed by gross impertinences. One would think that the democratic twenty-five-cent oyster stew, and respect therewith, would taste better than the small bird and the small bottle with insult as a *demi-tasse*. Then, too, she loses caste at once; for it is not enough that a girl should not do evil: she must also avoid the appearance of evil. She will be judged by the character of her companions, and a few half-hearted denials, a shrug of the shoulders, a discreetly suppressed smile, will place her among the list of his "mashes." Oh, hideous word!

Of course, now and again, at long, long intervals, a man really falls in love with a woman whom he has seen only upon the stage; but no "masher" proceedings are taken in such cases. On the other hand, very determined efforts are made to locate

the actress's family or friends, and through them to be properly presented.

Believing, as I did, that every girl had a perfect right to humiliate a "masher" to the extent of her ability, I once went, it's hard to admit it, but really I did go, too far in reprisal. Well, at all events, I was made to feel rather ashamed of myself. We were presenting "Alixe" at Mr. Daly's Broadway Theatre, just after the fire, and the would-be lady-killer was abroad in the land and unusually active. There was seldom a night that some one was not laughing contemptuously or frowning fiercely over a "drop letter," as we called them. One evening my box held a most inflammable communication. It was not written upon club paper, nor had it any private monogram; in fact, it was on legal cap. The hand was large, round, and laboriously distinct. The i's were dotted, the t's crossed with painful precision, while toward capitals and punctuation marks the writer showed

more generosity than understanding. His sentiment and romance were of the old-time rural type, and I am certain he longed to quote, "The rose is red, the violet's blue." I might have been a little touched but for the signature. I loathed the faintest hint of anonymity, and simply could not bring myself to believe that any man really and truly walked up and down the earth bearing the name of Mr. A. Fix. Yet that was the signature appended to the long, rapturous love-letter. I gave it a pitch into the waste-basket and dressed for the play. Of course I spoke of the name, and of course it was laughed at; but three nights later another letter came — oh, well, it was just a letter. The writer was very diffuse, and evidently had plenty of paper and ink and time at his disposal. He dwelt on his sufferings as each day passed without a letter from me. He explained just what efforts he had made, vainly made, to secure sleep each night. He did not live in a large

city when at home, and he described how nearly he had come to being run over in trying to cross our biggest street — while thinking of me. Oh, Mr. Fix! He bravely admitted he was due at the store out home, but he kept a-thinking I might not have got that first letter, or maybe I wanted to look him over before writing. So he had waited and was coming to the theatre that very night, and his seat was in the balcony, — No. 3, left side, front row, — and for fear I might not feel quite sure about him, he would hold high to his face, in his left hand, a large white handkerchief.

It didn't seem to occur to him that such an attitude would give him a very grief-stricken aspect; he only desired to give me a fair chance "to look him over." Without a second thought, I read that portion of the letter in the greenroom, and the laughter had scarcely died away when that admirable actor, but perfectly fiendish player of tricks, Louis James, was going quietly from

actor to actor arranging for the downfall of A. Fix.

So it happened that James, Clarke, and Lewis, instead of entering in a group, came on in Indian file, each holding in the left hand a large pocket-handkerchief. I being already on the stage, there was of course a fine spread of canvas in the balcony. The audience, ever quick to catch on to a joke, seeing each man glance upward, followed suit, spied the enormous handkerchief held high in the left hand, and realizing the situation, burst into hilarious laughter. Uselessly I pleaded; at every possible opportunity the white handkerchief appeared in some left hand, while the stage manager vainly wondered why the audience laughed in such unseemly places that night.

The next day that young person, whom I had treated as a common "masher," heaped a whole shovelful of hot, hot coals upon my guilty head by writing me a letter less carefully dotted and crossed, somewhat more

confused in metaphor than before, but beginning with: "I am afraid you are cruel. I think you must have betrayed me to your mates, for I do not remember that they did such things before last night with their handkerchiefs."

Then, after telling me his home address, his business, and his exact standing socially, he laid these specially large hot coals carefully upon my brow, "So, though you make a laughing-stock of me, now don't think I shall be mad about it; but remember if any trouble or sickness comes to you, no matter how far from now, if you will just write me one word, I'll help you to my plumb last cent," and truly Mr. Fix left me ashamed and sorry.

He had suffered for his name, which I believed to be an assumed one. Poor young man, I offer an apology to his memory.

One scamp wrote so brazenly, so persistently, demanding answers to be sent to a certain prominent club, that I one day laid the letters before Mr. Daly, and he adver-

tised in the theatre programme that "if Mr. B. M. B., of such a club, would call at the box office, he would receive not the answer he expected, but the one he deserved," and Mr. Daly was highly delighted when he heard that B. M. B., who was a "masher" *par excellence*, had been literally chaffed out of the club rooms.

Those creatures that, like poisonous toadstools, spring up at street corners to the torment of women, should be taken in hand by the police, since they encumber the streets and are a menace and a mortification to female citizens. Let some brazen woman take the place of one of these street "mashers," and proceed to ogle passers-by, and see how quickly the police would gather her in.

But so far as the stage "masher" is concerned, dear and anxious mamma, auntie, or sister, don't worry about the safety of your actress to be. The "masher" is an impertinence, a nuisance; but never, dear madam, never a danger.



CHAPTER XV

Social conditions behind the scenes

"WHAT social conditions exist behind the scenes?"

This fourth question is one that Charles Dickens would have called an "agriwator," and as it is repeated every now and again, I ask myself where is the curiosity about the theatre, its people, and its life to end? The question is, What social conditions exist behind the scenes? Now to be quite frank, the first few times this query appeared, I was distinctly aggravated. I said to myself, do these ladies and gentlemen — yes, three males are in this inquiring group — do they think we are a people so apart from all others that we require a separate and dis-

tinctly different social code; that we know nothing of the law governing the size, style, and use of the visiting card; that congratulations, condolences, are unknown rites; that invitations, acceptances, and regrets are ancient Hebrew to us, and calls, teas, dinners, and dances are exalted functions far above our comprehension? And then I read the question again, and saw I was making a ninny of myself — an easy thing to do with the thermometer at ninety-nine in the shade. That it said "behind the scenes," and with a laugh I recalled the little child who had delightedly witnessed her first Christmas pantomime; and being told afterward I was one of the people of the play, she watched and listened eagerly some time before coming and resting a dimpled hand on mine, to ask disappointedly, "Please, does all the actin' people 'have 'emselves jes' same as any one?"

Poor blue-eyed tot, she had expected at least a few twirls about the room, a few

bounds and hand kisses; and here I was "'having" just like any one. So all my mistaken vexation gone, I'll try to make plain our social condition behind the scenes.

In the first place, then, a theatrical company is almost exactly like one large family. Our feeling for one another is generally one of warm good-fellowship. In our manners there is an easy familiarity which we would not dream of using outside of our own little company circle. We are a socially inclined people, communicative, fond of friendly conversation, and hopelessly given over to jokes, or, as we put it, "to guying."

But don't imagine there's any *socialism* about a theatre that means community of property and association; on the contrary, we enter into the keenest competition with one another.

I dare say an outsider, as the non-professional has been termed time out of mind, watching our conduct for a few days and nights, would conclude that, though quite

harmless, we are all a little *mad.* For the actor's funny habit of injecting old, old lines of old, old plays into his everyday conversation must be somewhat bewildering to the uninitiated: —

If an elderly, heavy breathing, portly gentleman, lifting his hat to a gentle, dignified little lady, remarks, "Beshrew me, but I do love thee still. Isn't it hot this morning; take this chair." Or if a very slender popeyed young comedian, while wiping his brow, says, "Now could I drink hot blood and hold it not a sin," and some one else calmly answers, "You haven't got those words right, and you couldn't drink anything hot to-day without having a fit." Or if two big, stalwart men, meeting in the "entrance," fall suddenly into each other's arms, with a cry of "Camille!" "Armand!" Or if a man enters the greenroom with his hat on, and a half-dozen people call, "Do you take this for an ale-house, that you can enter with such a swagger?" and the hat comes off with a

laughing apology. Or if the man with the cane is everlastingly practising "carte and tierce" on somebody, or doing a broad-sword fight with any one who has an umbrella. If a woman passes with her eyes cast down, reading a letter, and some one says, "In maiden meditation, fancy free." If she eats a sandwich at a long rehearsal, and some one instantly begins, "A creature not too bright nor good for human nature's daily food." If she appears in a conspicuously new gown and some one cries, "The riches of the ship have come on shore," ten to one she replies, "A poor thing, but mine own."

These things will look and sound queer and flighty to the outsider, who, not acquainted with the lines or the plays they are from, cannot of course see how aptly some of them adapt themselves to the situation. But this one is plain to all. A young girl, who was a very careless dresser, was trailing along the "entrance" one evening,

when behind her the leading man, quoting Juliet, remarked, "'Thou knowest the mask of night is on my cheek,' or I would not dare tell you your petticoat is coming off;" a perfect gale of laughter followed, in which the little sloven joined heartily.

Then one morning, rehearsal being dismissed, I was hurrying away, intending to enjoy a ride on horse-back, when Mr. Davidge, Mr. Daly's "old man," lifting his hat politely, and twisting Macbeth's words very slightly, remarked, "I wish your horse swift and sure of foot, and so I do commend you to its back," and as I laughed, "Macbeth, Act III," we parted in mutual admiration for each other's knowledge of the great play.

The gentlemen are attentive to the ladies' small needs, providing seats when possible, bringing a wrap, a glass of water, fanning you if you are warm, carrying your long train if it is heavy; but never, never losing the chance to play a joke on you if they can.

There is generally some ringleader of

greenroom fun; for most actors are very impatient of "waits" between the scenes, and would rather pass such time in pranks than in quiet conversation. On one occasion some of the actors had made noise enough to reach the managerial ear, and they were forfeited. The actresses laughed at their discomfiture, and revenge was at once in order. Next night, then, four young men brought bits of calico and threaded needles with them, and when their "wait" came, they all sat quietly in a row and sewed steadily. The sight was so ludicrous the women went off into unbounded laughter, and were in their turn forfeited.

Nothing excuses the use of swear words behind the scenes, and even a very mild indulgence is paid for by a heavy forfeit. One actor, not too popular with the company, used always to be late, and coming into the dressing room, he would fling everything about and knock things over, causing any amount of annoyance to his room-mates.

He went on in but one act, the third, and the lateness of the hour made his lack of business promptitude the more marked. A joke was, of course, in order, and a practical joke at that.

One evening he was extra late, and that was the opportunity of the joking room-mates. They carefully dropped some powerful, strong-holding gum into the heels of his patent leather shoes, and had barely put them in place, when the ever-late actor was heard coming on the run down the passage. In he tore, flinging things right and left, overturning make-ups, and knocking down precious silk hats. He grabbed his shoes, jammed his foot into one, scowled and exclaimed disgustedly, "What the deuce! there's something in this shoe. Bah," he went on, "and in this one, too!"

"Take them off and shake 'em," suggested the dropper of the gum.

"No time," growled the victim; "I'll get docked if I'm a second late. But these con-

founded things feel damp in the heels," and he kicked and stamped viciously.

"Damp in the heels?" murmured the guilty one, interrogatively. "In the heels, said you? What a very odd place for dampness to accumulate. Now, personally, I find my heels are dry and smooth and hard, like — like a china nest-egg, don't you know; but *damp heels*, it doesn't sound right, and it must feel very uncomfortable. I don't wonder you kick!"

And another broke in with: "I say, old fellow, that was my India ink you spoiled then. But never mind, I suppose your heels trouble you," then asked earnestly, as the victim hastily patted a grey beard into place, "Is that good gum you have there? Will it hold that beard securely?"

"Will it hold? It's the strongest gum ever made, it can hold a horse. I have hard work to get it to dissolve nights with pure alcohol." This while the guilty one was writhing with that malicious joy



Clara Morris in "The Sphinx"

known in its fulness to the practical joker alone.

The victim, rushing from the room, reached the stage at the very moment his cue was spoken, and made his entrance so short of breath he could scarcely speak. The act was very long, the gum in his shoes dried nicely, the curtain fell. He went below to his room to dress for the street. He tried to remove and lay aside his patent leathers. Alas, alas! he laid aside instead his manners, his temper, his self-restraint, his self-respect. The gum proved itself worthy of his praise; it stuck, it held. The shoes were willing to come off on one condition only, — that they brought both sock and skin with them.

Three men, with tears in their eyes, had pencils, and kept tally of his remarks as he danced about after each frantic tug at a glued-on shoe. One took down every wounding, malicious word. A second caught and preserved every defamatory word. While the third and busiest one secured every

profane word that fell from his enraged lips.

Finally he poured the contents of the alcohol bottle into his shoes and, swearing like a madman, waited for the gum to soften. And the manager, who was not deaf, proved that his heart was harder than the best gum and could not be softened at all. And to this day no member of the company knows how much of the victim's salary was left to him that week after forfeits for bad words were all paid up. But some good came from the affair, for the actor was never again so late in arriving as not to have time to look into his shoes for any strange substance possibly lurking there.

Personally, I detest the practical joke, but I have, alas! never been above enjoying my share of the greenroom fun. Some members of Mr. Daly's company were very stately and dignified, and he would have been glad had we all been like them. But there were others who would have had fun with the

tombs of the Egyptian kings, and who could wring smiles from a graven image. Mr. Daly forfeited at last so recklessly, that either the brakes had to be put upon our fun or some one would have to do picket duty. The restless element had a wait of an entire long act in one play, and among those who waited was a tiny little bit of an old, old man. He wore rags in his "part," and on the seat of his trousers was an enormous red patch. He had been asked to stand guard in the greenroom door, and nothing loath, he only argued deprecatingly: "You'll all get caught, I'm afraid. You see, Mr. Daly's so sharp, if I cough, he'll hear me, too, and will understand. If I signal, he'll see me, and we'll all get forfeited together."

For a moment we were silently cast down. Then I rose to the occasion beautifully. I took the wee little man and placed him in the greenroom doorway, leaning with his back against the door-jamb. When he saw Mr. Daly in the distance, he simply was to

turn his bright red patch *toward* us — we would do the rest.

It was a glorious success. We kept an eye on the picket, and when the red patch danger signal was shown, silence fell upon the room. Forfeits ceased for a long time. Of course we paid our watchman for his services — paid him in pies. He had a depraved passion for bakers' pies, which he would not cut into portions, because he said it spoiled their flavour — he preferred working his way through them; and that small grey face seen near the centre of a mince pie whose rim was closing gently about his ears was a sight to make a supreme justice smile.

But our evil course was almost run: our little pie-eater, who was just a touch odd, or what people call "queer," on Thanksgiving Day permitted himself to be treated by so many drivers of pie wagons that at night he was tearful and confused, and though he watched faithfully for the coming of Mr.

Daly, while we laughingly listened to a positively criminal parody on "The Bells," watched for and saw him in ample time, he, alas! confusedly turned his red patch the wrong way, and we, every one, came to grief and forfeiture in consequence.

Obliging people, generous, ever ready to give a helping hand. Behind the scenes, then, our social condition, I may say, is one of good-mannered informality, of jollity tempered by respect and genuine good-fellowship.



THE ACTRESS AND RELIGION

NOTHING in my autobiography seems to have aroused so much comment, so much surprise, as my admission that I prayed in moments of great distress or anxiety, even when in the theatre.

One man writes that he never knew before that there was such a thing as a "praying actress." Poor fellow, one can't help feeling there's lots of other things he doesn't know; and though I wish to break the news as gently as possible, I have to inform him that I am not a *rara avis*, that many actresses

pray; indeed, the woods are full of us, so to speak.

One very old gentleman finds this habit of prayer "commendable and sweet," but generally there seems to be a feeling of amazement that I should dare, as it were, to bring the profession of acting to the attention of our Lord; and yet we are authorized to pray, "Direct us, O Lord, in *all our doings*, and further us with thy continual help, that in all our work we may glorify thy holy name."

It is not the work, but the motive, the spirit that actuates the work; whether embroidering stoles, sawing wood, washing dishes, or acting, if it is done honestly, for the glory of the holy name, why may one not pray for divine help?

One lady, who, poor soul, should have been born two or three hundred years ago, when her narrowness would have been more natural, is shocked, almost indignant; and though she is good enough to say she does not accuse me of "intentional sacrilege,"

still, addressing a prayer to God from a theatre is nothing less in her eyes than profanation. "For," says she, "you know we must only seek God in His sanctuary, the church."

Goodness, mercy! in that case some thousands of us would become heathen if we never found God save inside of a church.

Does this poor lady not read her Bible, then? Has she not heard the psalmist's cry: "If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there also; whither shall I flee from thy presence?"

Surely, there are a great many places besides the church between heaven and hell, and even in a theatre we may not flee from His presence.

But lest the young girl writers should feel abashed over their expressions of surprise at my conduct, I will show them what good company they have had.

A good many years ago a certain famous

scholar and preacher of New York City called upon me one day. I was absent, attending rehearsal. The creed of his denomination was particularly objectionable to me, but having wandered into the big stone edifice on Fourth Avenue one Sunday, I was so charmed by his clear reasoning, his eloquence, and, above all, by his evident sincerity, that I continued to go there Sunday after Sunday.

In my absence he held converse with my mother as to his regret at missing me, as to the condition of the weather, as to the age, attainments, and breed of my small dog, who had apparently been seized with a burning desire to get into his lap. We afterward found she only wished to rescue her sweet cracker, which he sat upon.

In his absent-minded way he then fell into a long silence, his handsome, scholarly head drooping forward. Finally he sighed and remarked: —

"She is an actress, your daughter?"

My mother, with lifted brows, made surprised assent.

"Yes, yes," he went on gently, "an actress, surely, for I see my paper commends her work. I have noted her presence in our congregation, and her intelligence." (I never sleep in the daytime.) "Our ladies like her, too; m-m, an actress, and yet takes an interest in her soul's salvation; wonderful! I —I don't understand! no, I don't understand!" A speech which did little to endear its maker to the actress's mother, I'm afraid.

See how narrowing are some creeds. This reverend gentleman was personally gentle, kind, considerate, and naturally just; yet, knowing no actor's life, never having seen the inside of a playhouse, he, without hesitation, denounced the theatre and declared it the gate of hell.

In the amusing correspondence that followed that call, the great preacher was on the defensive from the first, and in reading

over two or three letters that, because of blots or errors, had to be recopied, I am fairly amazed at the temerity of some of my remarks. In one place I charge him with "standing upon his closed Bible to lift himself above sinners, instead of going to them with the open volume and teaching them to read its precious message."

Perhaps he forgave much to my youth and passionate sincerity; at all events, we were friends. I had the benefit of his advice when needed, and, in spite of our being of different church denominations, he it was who performed the marriage service for my husband and myself.

So, girl writers, who question me, you see there have been other pebbles on my beach, and some big ones, too.

The question, then, that has been put so many times is, "Can there be any compatibility between religion and the stage?"

Now had it been a question of church and stage, I should have been forced to admit

that the exclusive spirit of the first, and the unending occupation of the second, kept them uncomfortably far apart. But the question has invariably been as to a compatibility between religion and the stage. Now I take it that religion means a belief in God, and the desire and effort to do His will; therefore I see nothing incompatible between religion and acting. I am a churchwoman now; but for many years circumstances prevented my entering the great army of Christians who have made public confession of their faith, and received baptism as an outward and visible sign of a spiritual change. Yet during those long years without a church I was not without religion. I knew naught of "justification," of "predestination," of "transubstantiation." I only knew I must obey the will of God. Here was the Bible; it was the word of God. There was Christ, beautiful, tender, adorable, and he said: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all

thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment; and the second is like unto it. Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Add to these the old Mosaic "Ten," and you have my religious creed complete. And though it is simple enough for a child to comprehend, it is difficult for the wisest to give perfect obedience, because it is not always easy to love that tormenting neighbour, even a little bit, let alone as well as oneself. How I wish there was some other word to take the place of "religion." It has been so abused, so misconstrued. Thousands of people shrink from the very sound of it, believing that to be religious means the solemn, sour-faced setting of one foot before the other in a hard and narrow way — the shutting out of all beauty, the cutting off of all enjoyment. Oh, the pity! the pity! Can't they read?

"Let all those that seek thee be joyful and glad in thee, and let such as love thee and thy salvation say always, The Lord be praised." Again, "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." But it is not always in giving alone that He loves cheerfulness. Real love and trust in God — which is religion, mind you — makes the heart feather light, opens the eye to beauty, the heart to sympathy, the ear to harmony, and all the merriment and joy of life is but the sweeter for the reverent gratitude one returns to the Divine Giver.

One evening, in a greenroom chatter, the word "religious" had in some way been applied to me, and a certain actress of "small parts," whose life had been of the bitterness of gall, suddenly broke out with: "What — what's that? religious — you? Well, I guess not! Why, you've more spirits in a minute than the rest of us have in a week, and you are as full of capers as a puppy. I guess I know religion when I see

it. It makes children loathe the Bible by forcing them to learn a hundred of its verses for punishment. It pulls down the shades on Sundays, eats cold meat and pickles, locks up bookcase and piano, and discharges the girl for walking with her beau. Oh, no! my dear, you're not religious."

Poor abused word; no wonder it terrifies people.

How many thousand women, I wonder, are kept from church by their inability to dress up to the standard of extravagance raised by those who are more wealthy than thoughtful. Even if the poor woman plucks up her courage and enters the church, the magnificence of her fortunate sisters distracts her attention from the service, and fills her with longing, too often with envy, and surely with humiliation.

Some years ago a party of ultra-high churchwomen decided to wear only black during Lent. One of these ladies condescended to know me, and in speaking of

the matter, she said: "Oh, I think this black garb is more than a fad, it really operates for good. It is so appropriate, you know, and — and a constant reminder of that first great fast — the origin of Lent; and as I walk about in trailing black, I know I look devout, and that makes me feel devout, and so I pray often, and you're always the better for praying, even if your dress is at the bottom of it — and, oh, well, I feel that I am in the picture, when I wear black during Lent."

But the important thing is that before the Lenten season was half over, female New York was walking the streets in gentle, black-robed dignity, and evidently enjoying the keeping of Lent because, to use a theatrical expression, "it knew it looked the part."

So much influence do these petted, beloved daughters of the rich exercise over the many, that I have often wished that, for the sake of the poorer women, the wealthy ones would set a fashion of extreme simplicity of costume

for church-going. Every female thing has an inalienable right to make herself as lovely as possible; and these graceful, clever women of fashion would know as well how to make simplicity charming as does the *grande dame* of France, who is never more *grande dame* than when, in plain little bonnet, simple gown, and a bit of a fichu, she attends her church.

These bright butterflies have all the long week to flutter their magnificence in. Their lunches, dinners, teas, dances, games, yachts, links, race-courses — every one gives occasion for glorious display. Will they not, then, be sweetly demure on Sunday for the sake of the "picture," spare their sisters the agony of craving for like beautiful apparel? for God has made them so, and they can't help wanting to be lovely, too.

Perhaps some day a woman of fashion, simply clad, will turn up her pretty nose contemptuously at splendour of dress at church service, and whisper, "What bad form!"

Then, indeed, as the tide sets her way,

she will realize her power, and the church will have many more attendants. The very poor woman will not be so cruelly humiliated, and the wage-earning girl, who puts so much of her money into finery, will have a more artistic and more suitable model to follow.

And you are beginning to think that free silver is not the only mad idea that has been put forward by a seemingly sane person. Ah, well, it's sixteen to one, you know, that this is both first and last of the church dress-reform.

To those two little maids who so anxiously inquire "if I believe prayer is of any real service, and why, since my own could not always have been answered," I can only say, they being in a minority, I have no authority to answer their question here. Perhaps, though, they may recall the fact that their loving mothers tenderly refused some of their most passionate demands in babyhood. And we are yet but children, who often pray improperly to our Father.

CHAPTER XVII

A DAILY UNPLEASANTNESS

WHAT is the most unpleasant experience in the daily life of a young actress?

Without pause for thought, and most emphatically too, I answer, her passing unattended through the city streets at night; that is made unalloyed misery, through terror and humiliation. The backwoods girl makes her lonely way through the forest by blazed trees, but the way of the lonely girl through the city streets is marked by blazing blushes.

It is an infamy that a girl's honesty should not protect her by night as well as by day. Those hideous hyenas of the midnight streets are never deceived. By one glance they can

distinguish between a good woman and those poor wandering ghosts of dead modesty and honour, who flit restlessly back and forth from alleys dark to bright gas glare; but bring one of these men to book, and he will declare that "decent women have no right to be in the streets after nightfall," as though citizens were to maintain public highways for the sole use one-half the time of all the evil things that hide from light to creep out at dark and meet those companions who are fair by day and foul by night.

Some girls never learn to face the homeward walk with steady nerves, others grow used to the swift approach, the rapidly spoken word, and receive them with set, stony face and deaf ears; but oh, the terror and the shame of it at first! And this horror of the night takes so many forms that it is hard to say which one is the most revolting—hard to decide between the vile innuendo whispered by a sober brute or the roared ribaldry of a drunken beast.

In one respect I differ from most of my companions in misery, since they almost invariably fear most the drunkard; while I ground my greater fear of the sober man upon the simple fact that I can't outrun him as I can a drunken one, at a pinch. One night, in returning home from a performance of "Divorce," — a very long play that brought me into the street extra late, — a shrieking man flew across my path, and as a second rushed after him with knife uplifted for a killing blow, his foot caught in mine, and as he pitched forward the knife sank into his victim's arm instead of his back as he had intended; and with the cries of "Murder! Police!" ringing in my ears, I ran as if I were the murderess. These things are in themselves a pretty high price to pay for being an actress.

I had a friend, an ancient lady, a relative of one of our greatest actors, who, for independence' sake, taught music in her old age. One night she had played at a concert and

was returning home. Tall and slight and heavily veiled, she walked alone. Then suddenly appeared a well-looking young son of Belial, undoubtedly a gentleman by daylight. He tipped his hat and twirled his mustache; she turned away her head. He cleared his throat; she seemed quite deaf. He spoke; he called her "girlie" (the scamp!). She walked the faster; so did he. He protested she should not walk home alone; she stopped; she spoke, "Will you please allow me to walk home in peace?"

But, no, that was just what he would not do, and suddenly she answered, "Very well, then, I accept your escort, though under protest."

Surprised, he walked at her side. The way was long, the silence grew painful. He ventured to suggest supper as they passed a restaurant; she gently declined. At last she stopped directly beneath a gas-lamp, and from her face, with sorrow-hollowed eyes and temples, where every one of her seventy-six

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Clara Morris in "Iwadne"

years had been stamped in cruel line and crease and wrinkle, she lifted up the veil and raised her sad old eyes reproachfully to his. He staggered back, turned red, turned white, stammered, took off his hat, attempted to apologize, then turned and fled.

"And what," I asked, "did you say to him?"

"Say, say," she repeated; "justice need not be cruel. Why add anything to the sight of this?" and she drew a finger down her withered cheek.

'Twas said with laughing bitterness, for she had been very fair, and well guarded, too, in the distant past; while then I could but catch her tired hands and kiss them, in a burst of pity that this ancient gentlewoman might not walk in peace through the city streets because fate had left her without a protector.

Appeal to the police, I think some one says. Of course, if he is about; but recall that famous old recipe of Mrs. Glass beginning, "First catch your hare and then——"

so, just catch your policeman. But believe me, they rarely appear together, — your tormentor of women and your policeman, — unless, indeed, the former is stupidly in liquor; and then what good if he is arrested? shame will prevent you from appearing against him. Silence and speed, therefore, are generally the best defensive weapons of the frightened, lonely girl.

Once through fright, fatigue, and shame I lost all self-control, and turning to the creature whom I could not outwalk, I cried out with a sob, "Oh, I am so tired, so frightened, and so ashamed; you make me wish that I were dead!" And to my amazement, he answered gruffly, "It's a pity *I'm* not," and disappeared in the dark side street.

After an actress has married and has a protector to see her safely home nights, she is apt to recall and to tell amusing stories of her past experiences; but I notice those tales are never told by the girls —

they only become funny when looked at from the point of perfect safety, though like everything else in the world, the dreaded midnight walk shows a touch of the ludicrous now and then.

I recall one snowy January night when I was returning home. It was on a Saturday, and I had played a five-act play twice with but a sandwich for my dinner, the weather forbidding my going home after the matinee. So being without change to ride with, hungry and unutterably weary, I started, bag in hand, to walk up Sixth Avenue. On the east side stood a certain club house (it stands there yet, by the way), whose peculiar feature was a vine-hung veranda across its entire front, from which an unusually long flight of steps led to the sidewalk. Quite unmolested, I had walked from the stage door almost to this building, when suddenly, as if he had sprung from the very earth, a man was at my elbow addressing me, and the fact that he was

not English, and so not understood, did not in the slightest degree lessen the terror his evil face inspired. I shrank away from him, and he caught at my wrist. It was too much. I gave a cry and started to run, when, tall and broad, a man appeared at the foot of the club-house steps, just ahead of me. Ashamed to be seen running, I halted, and dropped into a walk again.

Then with that exaggerated straightening of back and stiffening of knee adopted by one who tries to walk a floor-crack or chalk-line, the second man approached me. He was very big, he was silvery grey, and his dignity was portentous. At every step he struck the pavement a ringing blow with a splendid malacca cane. Old-fashioned and gold-headed, it looked enough like its owner to have been his twin brother. He lifted his high silk hat, and with somewhat florid indignation inquired: "My c-hild, was that in-nfamous cur annoying you shust now? A-a-h!" he broke off, flourish-

ing his cane over his head, "there y-you slink; I w-wish I had hold of you." And I heard the running footsteps of No. 1 as he darted away, across and down the avenue.

"An-and the police?" sarcastically resumed the big man, who wavered unsteadily now and then. "H-how useful are the police! How many do y-you see at this moment, pray, eh? And, by the way, m' child, what in the devil's name brings yer on the street alone at this hour, say, tell me that?" and he assumed a most judicial attitude and manner.

I replied, "I am going home from my work, sir."

"Y-your w-what?" he growled.

"My work, sir, at the theatre."

"Good Lord!" he groaned, "and t-that crawlin' r-reptile couldn't let you pass, you poor little soul, you!"

Upon my word, I thought he was going to weep over me. Next moment he turned his collar up with a violence that nearly

upset him, and exclaimed: "D-don't you be a-fraid. I'll see you safely home. G-go by yourself? not much you won't! I'll take you to your mother. S-say, you've got a mother, haven't you? Yes, that's right; every girl's worth anythin's got a mother. I-I'll take you to her, sure; receive maternal thanks, a-and all that. Oh, say, boys! look here!" he shouted, and holding out the big cane in front of me to prevent my passing, he called to him two other men, who slowly and with almost superhuman caution were negotiating the snowy steps.

"Say, Colonel! Judge! come here and help me p-pr'tect this un-fortunate child." The Judge at that moment sat heavily and unintentionally down on the bottom step, and the Colonel remarked pleasantly, though a trifle vaguely, "T-that's the time he hit it"; while the fallen man asked calmly from his snowy seat, "P-pr-protect what — f-from who?"

"This poor ch-i-ld from raging beasts and in-famous scoundrels, Judge," remarked my bombastic friend.

"We're gentlemen, my dear; and say, get the Judge up, Colonel, and start him, and we'll *all* see her safe home. Damn shame, a la-dy can't walk in safety, w-without 'er body of able-bodied cit-zens to protect her! Com'er long, now, child." And he grasped my arm and pushed me gently forward.

The Colonel tipped his hat over one eye, gave a military salute, and wavered back and forth. The Judge muttered something about "Honest woman against city of New York," and something "and costs," and both fell to the rear.

And thus escorted by all these intoxicated old gallants, I made my mortified way up the avenue, they wobbling and sliding and stammering, and he who held my arm, I distinctly remember, recited Byron to me, and told me many times that the Judge was "a p-perfect gentleman, and so was his wife."

This startling statement was delivered just as we reached Thirty-second Street. Like an eel I slipped from his grasp, and whirling about, I said as rapidly as I could speak, "I'm almost home now. I can see the light from here, and I can't take you any farther out of your way," and I darted down the darker street.

Looking back from my own stoop, I saw the three kindly old sinners making salutations at the corner. My bombastic friend and the Judge had their hats off, waving them, and the Colonel saluted with such rigid propriety, it seems a pity that he was facing the wrong way.

I laugh, oh, yes, I laugh at the memory, until I think how silvery were these three wine-muddled old heads, and then I feel "the pity, oh, the pity of it!"



A BELATED WEDDING

IT was in a city in the far West that this small incident took place — a city of the mountains still so young that some of its stateliest business buildings of stone or marble, with plate-glass, fine furniture, and electric lighting, were neighboured not merely by shanties, but actually by tents.

But though high up in the mountains, the young city was neither too far nor too high for vice to reach it; and so it came about that a certain woman, whose gold-bought smiles had become a trifle too mocking and satirical to be attractive, had come to the

young city and placed herself at the head of an establishment where, at command, every one from sunset laughed and was merry, and held out hungry, grasping little hands for the gold showered upon them — laughed, with weary, pain-filled eyes — laughed, with stiff, tired lips sometimes — but still laughed till sunrise — and then, well, who cared what they did *then?*

And this woman had waxed rich, and owned valuable property and much mining stock, and was generous to those who were down on their luck, and was quick with her revolver — as the man who tried to hold her up on a lonely road found out to his sorrow.

Now to this city there came a certain actress, and the papers and the theatre bills announced a performance of the old French play of "Camille." The wealthy Madame Elize, as she styled herself, had heard and read much of both actress and play, and knew that it was almost a nightly occurrence for men to shed tears over two of the scenes,

while women wept deliciously through the whole play.

She determined that she would go to that performance, though the manager assured the public, in large letters, that no one of her order could possibly be admitted. And she declared "that she could sit out that or any other play without tears. That no amount of play-acting could move her, unless it was to laughter."

And so the night came, and the best seat in the best box in all that crowded theatre was occupied by a woman of forty-five, who looked about thirty-eight, who, but for the fixed, immovable colour in her cheeks and her somewhat too large and too numerous diamonds, might from her black silk, rich dark furs, and her dignified bearing have passed for an honest woman.

She watched the first act with a somewhat supercilious manner, but the second act found her wiping her eyes — very cautiously; there was that unvarying colour to think of. The

third act found her well back in the shadow of the box curtain, and the last act she watched with a face of such fixed determination as to attract the wondering comment of several of the actors.

When the curtain fell, one of them remarked, "I'd like to know what that woman will do in the next few hours?"

This is what she did. Keeping back till the house was nearly empty, she left the theatre alone. Then she engaged a carriage — of which there were very, very few in that city of the mountains, where the people did most of their going and coming on horseback — and had herself conveyed to her home, ablaze with light and full of laughter; and bidding the driver wait, she entered quietly and went swiftly to her own apartment, where a man in slippers and dressing-gown sat in a big armchair, sleeping over the evening paper.

She lost no time, but aroused him at once, shaking him by the shoulder, and in cold, curt tones ordered him "to rise and dress for the street, and to go with her."



Clara Morris in the 1st Act of "Camille"

But he objected, asking: "Why the deuce he should go out that bitter night? And was she a fool, or did she take him for one?"

Upon which she had so savagely ordered him "to get on his boots, his coat, and overcoat" that the sleepiness had vanished from his sharp eyes, and he had exclaimed, "What is it, Kate? what's happened to you?"

And she answered: "I've had a blow — no, don't reach for your gun. I don't mean that — but, Jim, it hurts. (Here, let me tie that for you.) I've had a blow straight at the heart, and a woman gave it — God bless her! (Can't you brush your hair up over that thin place? Jim — why, Jim, upon my soul, you're grey!) Oh, hurry! here, take your fur coat — you'll need it. Come now — no, I won't tell till we're outside this house. Come — on the quiet, now — come," and taking him by the arm she dragged him down the hall and stairs, and so outside the front door.

There she stopped. The man shivered at

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the cold, but kept his gleaming eyes fastened on her white face, "Well?" he said.

She stood looking up at the glory of the sky above her, where the stars glittered with extraordinary brilliancy, and in an abstracted tone she observed, "There's the 'Dipper.'"

He watched her still silently; she went on: "Do you remember, Jim, when I taught school down in Westbury, how we used to look at the 'Dipper' together, because you didn't dare speak — of anything else? You got seven dollars a week, then, and I — oh, Jim! why in God's name *didn't* you speak? Then I might never have come to this." She struck the lintel of the door passionately, but went right on: "Yes — yes, I'm going to tell you, and you've got to make a decision, right here, *now!* You'll think I'm mad, I know; but see here now, I've got that woman's dying eyes looking into mine; I've got that woman's voice in my ears, and her words burnt into my living heart! I'll tell

you by and by, perhaps, what those words are, but first, my proposal: you are free to accept it, you are free to refuse it, or you are free to curse me for a drivelling idiot; but look you here, man, if you *laugh* at it, I swear I'll *kill* you! Now, will you help me out of this awful life? Jim, will you get into that carriage and take me to the nearest minister and marry me, or will you take this 'wad' and go down that street and out of my life forever?"

In the pause that followed they looked hard into one another's eyes. Then the man answered in six words. Pushing away the hand that offered him a great tight-rolled mass of paper money, he said, "Put that away — now, come on," and they entered the carriage, and drove to the home of a minister. There a curious thing happened. They had answered satisfactorily the reverend gentleman's many questions before he quite realized *who* the woman was. When he did recognize her, he refused to perform

the ceremony, and with words of contemptuous condemnation literally drove them from the house, and with his ecclesiastical hand banged the door after them.

They visited another minister, and their second experience differed from their first in two points, — the gentleman was quicker in his recognition and refusal, and refrained from banging the door. And so they drove up and down and across the city, till at last they stood at the carriage door and looked helpless at each other. Then the man said, "That's the last one, Kate," and the woman answered, "Yes, I know — I know." She drew a long, hard breath that was not far from a sob, and added, "Yes, they've downed me; but it wasn't a fair game, Jim, for they've played with marked cards."

She had entered the carriage when the driver with the all-pervading knowledge and unlimited assurance of the Western hackman remarked genially: "Madame Elize, there's another gospel-sharp out on the edge of the

town. He's poorer than Job's turkey, and his whole dorgon'd little scantlin' church ain't bigger than one of them Saratogy trunks, but his people just swear by him. Shall I take you out there?"

Madame Elize nodded an assent, and once more they started. It was a long drive. The horses strained up killing grades, sending out on the cold air columns of steam from their dilating nostrils. The driver beat first one hand and then the other upon his knees, and talked amicably if profanely to his horses; but inside the carriage there was utter silence.

At last they stopped before a poor, cold-looking little cottage, and entering made their wishes known to a blue-eyed, tall young man, with thin, sensitive lips, who listened with grave attention. He knew precisely who and what she was, and very gently told her he would have to ask one unpleasant question, "Was the man at her side acquainted with her past, or was he a

stranger who was being deceived — victimized, in fact?"

And Kate, with shining eyes, turned and said: "Tell him, Jim, how for six honest, innocent years we were friends. Then tell him how for fifteen years we've been partners in life. Tell him whether you know me, Jim, or whether you're victimized."

And then the young minister had told them he was proud and thankful to clasp their hands and start them on their new path, with God's blessing on them. And they were married at last; and as they drove away, they noted the strange outlines of the mountains, where they reared their stupendous bulk against the star-sown sky. A sense of awe came upon them — of smallness, of helplessness. Instinctively they clasped hands, and presently the woman said: "Oh, Jim, the comfort of a wedding ring! It circles us about so closely, and keeps out all the rest of the world."

And Jim stooped his head and kissed her.



CHAPTER XIX

SALVINI AS MAN AND ACTOR

IT is not often, I fancy, that one defends one's hero or friend from himself. Yet that about describes what I am doing now for the famous Salvini. An acquaintance of mine, a man self-contained and dignified, who was reading the other day, startled me by muttering aloud, "Oh, that mine enemy would write a book!" and a moment later, flinging the volume from him, he cried: "Where were his friends? Why did they permit him to write of himself?"

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed in bewilderment, "where were whose friends? Of whom are you speaking, and why are you so excited?"

"Oh," he answered impatiently, "it's the disappointment! I judged the man by his splendid work; but look at that book — the personal pronoun forms one solid third of it. I know it does!" and he handed me the volume in question.

"Well," I said, as I glanced at the title, — "Autobiography of Tommaso Salvini," — "no matter what the book may say, Tommaso Salvini is a mighty actor." And then I began to read. At first I was a bit taken aback. I had thought Mr. Macready considered himself pretty favourably, had made a heavy demand on the I's and my's in his book; but the bouquets he presented to himself were modest little nosegays when compared with the gorgeous floral set pieces provided *ad libitum* for "Signor Salvini" by Signor Salvini.

Then presently I began to smile at the open honesty of this self-appreciation, at the naïve admiration he expresses for his figure, his voice, his power. "After all," I said,

"when the whole civilized world has for years and years affirmed and reaffirmed that he is the greatest actor living, is it strange that he should come to believe the world?"

"But," growled my friend, "why could he not be content with the world's statement? Why had he no reticence? Look at these declarations: that no words can describe his power, that everybody wished to know him, that everybody wished to claim his friendship, that everybody made it his boast to be seen in his company, etc."

"Well," I answered, "you certainly cannot doubt the truth of the assertions. I believe every one of them. You see, you are not making any allowance for temperament or early environment. Those who are humbly born in a kingdom are lifted by a monarch's praise to the very pinnacle of pride and joy and superiority. Think of the compliments paid this man by royalty. Think, too, of his hot blood, his quick imagination. You can't expect calm self-restraint from him; and just

let me tell you, for your comfort, that this 'book Salvini' is utterly unlike the kindly gentleman who is the real, everyday Salvini."

My friend looked at me a moment, then shaking hands he added gravely: "Thank you. The great actor goes upon his pedestal again, to my own satisfaction; but — but — I don't think I care for this book. I'll wait till some one else tells of his triumphs and his gifts," and laying it upon the table he took his departure.

It is astonishing what a misleading portrait Signor Salvini has drawn of himself. I worked with him, and I found him a gentleman of modest, even retiring, disposition and most courtly manners. He was remarkably patient at the long rehearsals which were so trying to him because his company spoke a language he could not understand.

The love of acting and the love of saving were veritable passions with him, and many were the amusing stories told of his economies; but, in spite of his personal frugality,

he was generous in the extreme to his dear ones.

When I had got over my first amazement at receiving a proposal to act with the great Italian, Mr. Chizzola, his manager, stated terms, and hastened to say that a way had been found by which the two names could be presented without either taking preference of the other on the bill, and that the type would of course be the same in both — questions I should never have given a thought to, but over which my manager stood ready to shed his heart's blood. And when I said that I should willingly have gone on the bills as "supporting Signor Salvini," I thought he was going to rend his garments, and he indignantly declared that such talk was nothing less than heresy when coming from a securely established star.

At one of our rehearsals for the "Morte Civile," a small incident occurred that will show how gracious Signor Salvini could be. Most stars, having the "business" of their

play once settled upon, seem to think it veritable sacrilege to alter it, no matter how good the reason for an alteration; and a suggestion offered to a star is generally considered an impertinence. In studying my part of Rosalia, the convict's wife, a very pretty bit of "business" occurred to my mind. I was to wear the black cross so commonly seen on the breast of the Roman peasant women, and once at an outbreak of Conrad's, I thought if I raised that cross without speaking, and he drooped before it, it would be effective and quite appropriate, as he was supposed to be superstitiously devout. I mentioned it to young Salvini, who cried eagerly, "Did you tell my father — did he see it?"

"Good heavens!" I answered, "do you suppose I would presume to suggest 'business' to a Salvini? Besides, could anything new be found for him in a play he has acted for twenty years? No, I have not told your father, nor do I intend to take such a liberty."

But next morning, when we came to that

scene, Signor Salvini held up his hand for a halt in the rehearsal, called for Alessandro, and, bidding him act as interpreter, said, smiling pleasantly, to me, "Now zee i-dee please you, madame?" for young Alessandro had betrayed my confidence. There was a mocking sparkle in Salvini's blue eyes, but he was politely ready to hear and reject "zee i-dee." I felt hot and embarrassed, but I stood by my guns, and placing Alessandro in the chair, I made him represent Conrad; and when he came to the furious outburst, I swiftly lifted the cross and held it before his eyes till his head sank upon my breast. But in a twinkling, with the cry, "No — no! I show!" Salvini plucked Alessandro out of the seat, flung himself into it, resumed the scene, and as I lifted the cross before his convulsed features, his breath halted, slowly he lifted his face, when, divining his meaning, I pressed the cross gently upon his trembling lips, and with a sob his head fell weakly upon my breast. It was beautifully done;

even the actors were moved. Then he spoke rapidly to his son, who translated to me thus: "How have I missed this 'business' all these years? It is good — we will keep it always — tell madame that." And so, courteously and without offence, this greatest of actors accepted a suggestion from a newcomer in his play.

A certain English actor, who had been with him two or three seasons, made a curious little mistake night after night, season after season, and no one seemed to heed it. Of course Salvini, not speaking English, could not be expected to detect the error. Where the venomous priest should humbly bow himself out with the veiled threat, "This may yet end in a trial — and — conviction!" the actor invariably said, "This may yet end in a trial of convictions!" Barely three nights had passed when Signor Salvini said to his son, "Why does Miss Morris smile at that man's exit? It is not funny. Ask why she smiles." And he was greatly put out with his actor

when he learned the cause of my amusement. A very observant man, you see.

He is a thinking actor; he knows *why* he does a thing, and he used to be very intolerant of some of the old-school "tricks of the trade." Mind, when I was acting with him, he had come to understand fairly well the English of our ordinary, everyday vocabulary, and if he was quite calm and not on exhibition in any way, he could speak it a little and quite to the point, as you will see. He particularly disliked the old, old trick called "taking the stage," that is, when a good speech has been made, the actor at its end crosses the stage, changing his position for no reason on earth save to add to his own importance. It seemed Salvini had tried through his stage manager to break up the wretched habit; but one morning he saw an actor end his speech at the centre of the stage, and march in front of every one to the extreme right-hand corner. A curl came to the great actor's lip, then he said inquiringly,

"What for?" The actor stammered, "I — I — it's my cross, you know — the end of my speech." — "Y-e-es," sweetly acquiesced the star. "Y-e-es, you cross, I see — but what for?" The actor hesitated. "You do *so*," went on Salvini, giving a merciless imitation of the swelling chest and stage stride of the guilty one, as he had crossed from centre down to extreme right. "You do so — but for *why?* A-a-ah!" Suddenly he seemed to catch an idea. "A-a-ah! is it that you have zee business with zee people in zee box? A-a-ah! you come spik to zose people? No? Not for that you come? You have *no* reason for come here, you say? Then, for God's sake, stay centre till you *have* a reason!"

It was an awful lesson, but what delicious acting. The simple, earnest inquiry, the delighted catching at an idea, the following disappointment, and the final outburst of indignant authority — he never did anything better for the public.

During the short time we acted together but one cloud, a tiny, tiny one of misunderstanding, rose between us, but according to reports made by lookers-on a good deal of lightning came out of it. Of course not understanding each other's language, we had each to watch the other as a cat would watch a mouse, in order to take our cues correctly. At one point I took for mine his sudden pause in a rapidly delivered speech, and at that pause I was to speak instantly. We got along remarkably well, for his soul was in his work, and I gave every spark of intelligence I had in me to the effort to satisfy him; so by the fifth or sixth performance we both felt less anxiety about the catching of our cues than we had at first. On the night I speak of, some one on Salvini's side of the stage greatly disturbed him by loud whispering in the entrance. He was nervous and excitable, the annoyance (of which I was unconscious) threw him out of his stride, so to speak. He glanced off warningly and snapped his fingers.

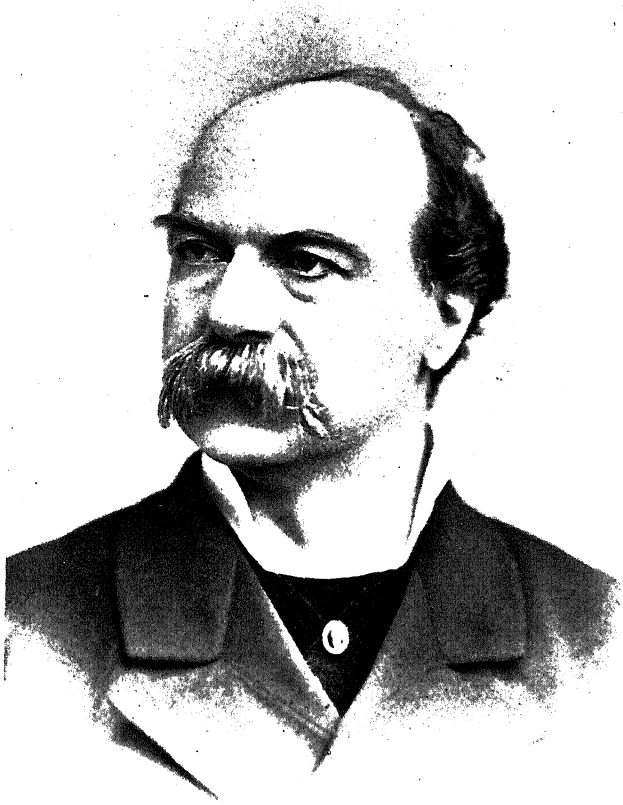
No use; on went the giggling and whispering. At last, in the very middle of a speech, wrath overcame him. He stopped dead. That sudden stop was my cue. Instantly I spoke. Good heaven! he whirled upon me like a demon. I understood that a mistake had been made, but it was not mine. I knew my cue when I got it. The humble Rosalia was forgotten. With hot resentment my head went up and back with a fling, and I glared savagely back at him. A moment we stood in silent rage. Then his face softened, he laid the fingers of his left hand on his lips, extending his right with that unspeakably deprecating upturning of the palm known only to the foreign-born. An informing glance of the eye toward the right, followed by a faint "*Pardon!*" was enough. I dropped back to meek Rosalia, the scene was resumed, the cloud had passed. But one man who had been looking on said: "By Jove! you know, you two looked like a pair of blue-eyed devils, just ready to rend each

other. Talk about black-eyed rage; it's the lightning of the blue eyes that sears every time."

I had been quite wild to see Signor Salvini on his first visit to America, and at last I caught up with him in Chicago, and was so happy as to find my opportunity in an extra matinee. The play was "Othello," and during the first act he looked not only a veritable Moor, but, what was far greater, he seemed to be Shakespeare's own "Moor of Venice." The splendid presence, the bluff, soldierly manner, the open, honest look, as the "round unvarnished tale" was delivered, made one understand, partly at least, how "that maiden never bold, a spirit so still and quiet," had come at last to see "*Othello's* visage *in his mind*, and to his honour and his valiant parts to consecrate her fortune and her soul!" Through all the noble scene, through all the soldierly dignity and candid speech, there was that tang of roughness that so naturally clung to the man whose

life from his seventh year had been passed in the "tented field," and who himself declared, "Rude am I in speech, and little bless'd with the set phrase of peace."

In short, Salvini was a delight to eye and ear, and satisfied both imagination and judgment in that first act. Like many people who are much alone, I have the habit of speaking sometimes to myself — a habit I repented of that day, yes, verily I did; for when, at Cyprus, Othello entered and fiercely swept into his swarthy arms the pale loveliness of Desdemona, 'twas like a tiger's spring upon a lamb. The bluff and honest soldier, the English Shakespeare's Othello, was lost in an Italian Othello. Passion choked, his gloating eyes burned with the mere lust of the "sooty Moor" for that white creature of Venice. It was revolting, and with a shiver I exclaimed aloud, "Ugh, you splendid brute!" Realizing my fault, I drew quickly back into the shadow of the curtain; but a man's rough voice had answered in-



Tommaso Salvini

stantly, "Make it a *beast*, ma'am, and I'm with you!" I was cruelly mortified.

But there was worse to happen that day. The leading lady, Signora Piamonti, an admirable actress, was the Desdemona. She played the part remarkably well, and was a fairly attractive figure to the eye, if one excepted her foot. It was exceptionally long and shapeless, and was most vilely shod. Her dresses, too, all tipped up in the front, unduly exposing the faulty members; many were the comments made, and often the query followed, "Why doesn't she get some American shoes?" I am sorry to say that some of our daily papers even were ungracious enough to refer to that physical defect, when only her work should have been considered and criticised.

The actors had reached the last act. The bed stood in the centre of a shallow alcove, heavily curtained. These hangings were looped up at the beginning of the act, and were supposed to fall to the floor, completely

concealing the bed and its occupant after the murder. The actor had long before become again Shakespeare's Othello. We had seen him tortured, racked, and played upon by the malignant Iago; seen him, while perplexed in the extreme, irascible, choleric, sullen, morose; but now, as with tense nerves we waited for the catastrophe, he was truly formidable. The great tragedy moved on. Desdemona's piteous entreaties had been choked in her slim throat, the smothering pillow held in place with merciless strength. Then at Emilia's disconcerting knock and demand for admission, Othello had let down and closely drawn the two curtains. But alas and alack a day! though they were thick and rich and wide, they failed to reach the floor by a good foot's breadth — a fact unnoticed by the star. You may not be an actor; but really when you add to that twelve or fourteen-inch space the steep incline of the stage — why, you can readily understand how advisable it was for the dead

Desdemona that day to stay dead until the play was over.

Majestically Othello was striding down to the door, where Emilia was knocking for admittance, when there came that long indrawn breath — that "a-a-h!" that from the auditorium always means mischief — and a sudden bobbing of heads this way and that in the front seats. In an instant the great actor felt the broken spell, knew he had lost his hold upon the people — but why? He went on steadily, and then, just as you have seen a field of wheat surged in one wave by the wind, I saw the closely packed people in that wide parquet sway forward in a great gust of laughter. With quick, experienced eye I scanned first Othello's garb from top to toe, and finding no unseemly rent or flaw of any kind to provoke laughter, I next swept the stage. Coming to the close-drawn curtains, I saw — heavens! No wonder the people laughed. The murdered Desdemona had risen, was evidently sitting on the side of

the bed; for beneath the curtains her dangling feet alone were plainly seen, kicking cheerfully back and forth. Such utterly unconscious feet they were that I think the audience would not have laughed again had they kept still; but all at once they began a "heel-and-toe step," and people rocked back and forth, trying to suppress their merriment. And then — oh, Piamonti! — swiftly the toe of the right foot went to the back of the left ankle and scratched vigorously. Restraint was ended, every one let go and laughed and laughed. From the box I saw in the entrance the outspread fingers, the hoisted shoulders, the despairingly shaken heads of the Italian actors, who could find no cause for the uproar. Salvini behaved perfectly in that, disturbed, distressed, he showed no sign of anger, but maintained his dignity through all, even when in withdrawing the curtains and disclosing Desdemona dead once more the incomprehensible laughter again broke out. But late as it was and

short the time left him, he got the house in hand again, again wove his charm, and sent the people away sick and shuddering over his too real self-murder.

As I was leaving the box I met one connected with the management of the theatre, who, furious over the *faux pas*, was roughly denouncing the actress, whom he blamed entirely, and I took it upon myself to suggest that he pour a vial or two of his wrath upon the heads of his own property man and the stage manager, who had grossly neglected their duty in failing to provide curtains of the proper length. And I chuckled with satisfaction as I saw him plunge behind the scenes, calling angrily upon some invisible Jim to come forth. I had acted as a sort of lightning-rod for a sister actress.

Salvini's relations with his son were charming, though it sounded a bit odd to hear the stalwart young man calling him "papa." Alessandro had dark eyes and black hair, so naturally admired the opposite colouring, and

I never heard him speak of his father's English second wife without some reference to her fairness. It would be "my blond mamma," "my little fair mamma," "my father's pretty English wife," or "before my little blond mamma died." He felt the "mamma" and "papa" jarred on American ears, and often corrected himself; but when Signor Salvini himself once told me a story of his father, he referred to him constantly as "my papa," just as he does in this book of his that makes him seem so egotistical and so determined to find at all costs the vulnerable spot, the weak joint in the armour, of all other actors.

Certainly he could not have been an egotist in the bosom of his family. A friend in London went to call upon his young wife, his "white lily." She was showing the house to her visitor, when, pausing suddenly before a large portrait of her famous husband, she became silent, her uplifted eyes filled, her lips smiled tremulously, she gave

a little gasp, and whispered, "Oh, he's almost like God to me!"

The friend, startled, even shocked, was about to reprove her, but a glance into the innocent face showed no sacrilege had been meant, only she had never been honoured, protected, happy, before — and some women worship where they love. Could an egotist win and keep such affection and gratitude as that?

Among those who complain of his opinionated book I am amused to find one who fairly exhausted himself in praise, not to say flattery, of this same Salvini. It is very diverting to the mere looker-on, when the world first proclaims some man a god, bowing down and worshipping him, and then anathematizes him if he ventures to proclaim his own godship. I have my quarrel with the book, I confess it. I am sorry he does not show how he did his tremendous work, show the nature of those sacrifices he made. How one would enjoy a word-picture of the place where he obtained his humble meals in

those earliest days of struggle; who shared them, and in what spirit they were discussed, grave or gay! Italian life is apt to be picturesque, and these minor circumstances mean much when one tries to get at the daily life of a man. But Salvini has given us merely splendid results, without showing us *how* he obtained them. Yet what a lesson the telling would have been for some of our indolent actors! Why, even at the zenith of his career, Salvini attended personally to duties most actors leave to their dressers. He used to be in his dressing-room hours before the overture was on, and in an ancient gown he would polish his armour, his precious weapons or ornaments, arrange his wigs, examine every article of dress he would require that night, and consequently he never had mishaps. He used to say: "The man there? Oh, yes, he can pack and lock and strap and check, but only an actor can understand the care of these artistic things. What I do myself is well

done; this work is part of my profession; there is no shame in doing it. And all the time I work, I think — I think of the part — till I have all forgot — *all* but just that part's self."

And yet, O dear, these are the things he does not put in his book. When he was all dressed and ready for the performance, Salvini would go into a dark place and walk and walk and walk; sometimes droopingly, sometimes with martial tread. Once, I said, "You walk far, signor?"

"*Si, signorina,*" he made answer, then eagerly, "*I walk me into him!*" And while the great man was "walking into the character," the actors who supported him smoked cigarettes at the stage door until the dash for dressing room and costume.

Some women scold because he has not given pictures of the great people whom he met. "Why," they ask, "did he not describe Crown Princess Victoria" (the late Empress Frederick) "at least — how she looked, what

she wore? Such portraits would be interesting." But Salvini was not painting portraits, not even his own — truly. He was giving a list of his triumphs; and if he has shown self-appreciation, he was at least perfectly honest. There is no hypocrisy about him. If he knew Uriah Heep, he did not imitate him; for in no chapter has he proclaimed himself "'umble." If one will read Signor Salvini's book, remembering that the pæans of a world have been sung in his honour, and that he really had no superior in his artistic life, I think the I's and my's will seem simply natural.

However he may have been admired in other characters, I do truly believe that only those who have seen him in "Othello" and "Morte Civile" can fully appreciate the marvellous art of the actor. I carry in my mind two pictures of him, — Othello, the perfect animal man, in his splendid prime, where, in a very frenzy of conscious strength, he dashes Iago to the earth, man and soldier lost in the

ferocity of a jungle male beast, jealously mad — an awful picture of raging passion. The other, Conrad, after the escape from prison; a strong man broken in spirit, wasted with disease, a great shell of a man — one who is legally dead, with the prison pallor, the shambling walk, the cringing manner, the furtive eyes. But oh, that piteous salute at that point when the priest dismisses him, and the wrecked giant, timid as a child, humbly, deprecatingly touches the priest's hand with his finger-tips and then kisses them devoutly! I see that picture yet, through tears, just as I saw for the first time that illustration of supreme humility and veneration.

Oh, never mind a little extravagance with personal pronouns! A beloved father, a very thorough gentleman, but above all else the greatest actor of his day. There is but the one Salvini, and how can he help knowing it? So to book and author — ready! *Viva Salvini!*



FRANK SEN: A CIRCUS EPISODE

THE circus season was over, the animals had gone into comfortable winter quarters, while the performers, less fortunate than the beasts, were scattered far and near, "some in rags and some in tags, and some" (a very few) "in velvet gowns." But one small group had found midwinter employment, a party of Japanese men and women, who were jugglers, contortionists, and acrobats; and as their work was pretty as well as novel, they found a place on the programme of some of the leading vaudeville theatres.

They were in a large Western city. Behind the curtain their retiring manners, their

exquisite cleanliness, their grave and gentle politeness, made them favourites with the working forces of the theatre, while before the curtain the brilliant, graceful precision with which they carried out their difficult, often dangerous, performance won them the high favour of the public.

On that special day the matinee was largely attended, the theatre being filled, even to the upper circles, as at night. Smilingly the audience had watched the movements of the miniature men and women in their handsome native costumes, and with "Ohs!" and "Ahs!" had seen them emerge from those robes, already arrayed for acrobatic work, in suits of black silk tights with trunks and shoulder and wrist trimmings of red velvet fairly stiffened with gold embroideries; and then came the act the people liked best, because it contained the element of danger, because in its performance a young girl and a little lad smilingly risked life and limb to entertain them.

The two young things had climbed like cats up to the swinging bars, high up, where the heat had risen from a thousand gas lights, and the blood thundered in their ears, and the pulses on their temples beat like hammers. So high, that looking down through the quivering, bluish mist, the upturned faces of the people merged together and became like the waters of a pale, wide pool. Their work was well advanced. With clocklike precision they had obeyed, ever smilingly obeyed, the orders conveyed to them by the sharp tap of the fan their trainer held, though to the audience the two young forms glittering in black and scarlet and gold, poising and fluttering there, were merely playing in mid-air like a pair of tropical birds.

They were beginning their great feat, in which danger was so evident that women often cried out in terror and some covered their eyes and would not look at all — the music even had sunken to a sort of tremor of fear. They were for the moment hang-

ing head downward from their separate bars, when across the stillness came the ominous sound of cracking, splintering wood; afterward it was known that the rung of a chair in an upper private box had broken, but then, — but *then!* the sound was close to the swaying girl's ear!

Believing it was her bar that was breaking, her strained nerves tore free from all control! Driven by fear, she made a mad leap out into space, reaching frantically for the little brown hands that a half second later would have been ready for her, with life and safety in their tenacious grasp.

To those who do their work in space and from high places, the distance between life and death, between time and eternity, is often measured by half seconds. Little Omassa had leaped too soon, the small brown hands with power to save were not extended. She grasped the empty air, gave a despairing cry, and as she whirled downward, had barely time to realize that the sun had gone black

out in the sky, and that the world with its shrieking millions was thundering to its end, when the awful crash came.

There were shouts and shrieks, tears and groans, and here and there helpless fainting. Ushers rushed from place to place, the police appeared suddenly. The Japanese, silent, swift, self-controlled, were moving their paraphernalia that the curtain might be lowered, were stretching a small screen about the inert, fallen figure, were bringing a rug to lift her on, and their faces were like so many old, *old* ivory masks.

Tom McDermott, in his blue coat, stood by the silent little figure waiting for the rug and for the coming of the doctor, and groaned, "On her face, too — and she a girl child!"

Tom had seen three battle-fields and many worse sights, but none of them had misted his eyes as did this little glittering, broken heap, and he turned his face away and muttered, "If she'd only keep quiet!" for truly

it was dreadful to see the long shudders that ran over the silent, huddled thing, to see certain red threads broadening into very rivulets. At last the ambulance, then the all-concealing curtain, the reviving music, a song, a pretty dance, and *presto*, all was forgotten!

When Omassa opened her eyes, her brain took up work just where it had left off; therefore she was astonished to find the sun shining, for had she not seen the sun go out quite black in the sky? Yet here it was so bright, and she was — was, where? The room was small and clean, oh, clean! like a Japanese house, and almost as empty. Could it be? But no, this bed was American, and then why was she so heavy? What great weight was upon her? She could not move one little bit, and oh, my! *what* was it she could faintly see beyond and below her own nose — was it shadow? Surely she could not see her own *lip?* She smiled at that, and the movement wrung a cry of agony from her — when, like

magic, a face was bending over her, so kind and gentle, and then a joyous voice cried to some one in the next room, "This little girl, not content with being alive, sir, has her senses — is she not a marvel?"

And with light, delicate touch the stranger moistened the distended, immovable lip poor Omassa had dimly seen, through which her lower teeth had been driven in her fall, and in answer to her pleading, questioning glances at her own helpless body, told her she was encased in plaster now, but by and by she would be released, and now she was to be very quiet and try to sleep. And then she smoothed a tiny wrinkle out of the white quilt, shut out the sunlight, and, smiling kindly back at her, left Omassa, who obediently fell asleep — partly because her life was one of obedience, and partly because there was nothing else to do.

And then began the acquaintance between Mrs. Helen Holmes, nurse, and Omassa, Japanese acrobat. The other nurses teased

Helen Holmes about her pet patient, saying she was only a commonplace, Japanese child woman; but Mrs. Holmes would exclaim, "If you could only see her light up and glow!"

And so they came to calling Omassa "the lantern," and would jestingly ask "when she was going to be lighted up"; but there came a time when Mrs. Holmes knew the magic word that would light the flame and make the lantern glow, like ruby, emerald, and sapphire; like opal and tourmaline.

The child suffered long and terribly; both arms were broken, and in several places, also her little finger, a number of ribs, her collar-bone, and one leg, while cuts were simply not counted. During her fever-haunted nights she babbled Japanese for hours, with one single English name appearing and reappearing almost continually, — the name of Frank; and when she called that name it was like the cooing of a pigeon, and the down-drooping corners of her grave

mouth curled upward into smiles. She spoke English surprisingly well, as the other members of the troupe only knew a very little broken English; and had she not placed the emphasis on the wrong syllable, her speech would have been almost perfect.

Generally she was silent and sad and unsmiling, but grateful, passionately grateful to her "nurse-lady," as she called Mrs. Holmes; yet when that kind woman stooped to kiss her once, Omassa shrank from the caress with such repugnance as deeply to wound her, until the little Japanese had explained to her the national abhorrence of kissing, assuring her over and over again that even "the Japan ma'ma not kiss little wee baby she love."

Mrs. Holmes ceased to wonder at the girl's sadness when she found she was absolutely alone in the world: no father, no mother; no, no sister, no brother, "no what you call c-cousine? — no nothing, nobody have I got what belong to me," she said.

One morning, as her sick-room toilet was completed, Mrs. Holmes said lightly:—

"Omassa, who is Frank?" and then fairly jumped at the change in the ivory-tinted, expressionless face. Her long, narrow eyes glowed, a pink stain came on either cheek, she raised herself a little on her best arm, eagerly she cried, "You know him—oh, you know Frank?"

Regretfully Mrs. Holmes answered, "No, dear, I don't know him."

"But," persisted Omassa, "you know him, or how could you speak his name?"

"I learned the name from you, child, when you talked in the fever. I am very sorry I have caused you a disappointment. I am to blame for my curiosity—forgive me."

All the light faded from her face and very quietly she lay down upon her pillow, her lips close-pressed, her eyes closed; but she could not hide the shining of the tears that squeezed between her short, thick lashes and clung to them. 'Twas long before his

name was mentioned again; but one day something had been said of friends, when Omassa with intense pride had exclaimed: —

"I have got my own self one friend — he — my friend Frank."

"What's his other name?" asked the nurse.

"Oh, he very poor, he got only one name."

"But, dear, he must have another name, he is Frank somebody or something."

"No! no!" persisted Omassa with gentle obstinacy, "he tell me always true, he very poor, good man — he got only one name, my Frank Sen."

"There," cried Mrs. Holmes, triumphantly, "you see he *has* two names after all, you have just called him by them both — Frank Sen."

At which the invalid sent forth a tinkling laugh of amusement, crying: "Oh, that not one man's name, oh, no! That Sen that like your Mr. — Mrs.; you nurse-lady, you Holmes Sen. Ito — big Japan fight man, he Ito Sen, you unnerstand me, nurse-lady?"

"Yes, child, I understand. Sen is a title, a term of respect, and you like to show your friend Frank all the honour you can, so you call him Frank Sen."

And Omassa with unconscious slanginess gravely answered: "You right *on* to it at first try. My boss" (her manager Kimoto) "find *me* baby in Japan, with very bad old man. He gamble all time. I not know why he have me, he not my old man, but he sell me for seven year to Kimoto, and Kimoto teach me jump, turn, twist, climb, and he send my money all to old man — *all*. We go Mexico — South America — many Islands — to German land, and long time here in this most big America — and the world so big — and then I so little Japan baby — I no play — I no sing — I know nothing what to do — and just *one* person in this big lone-some*ness* make a kindness to me — my Frank Sen — just one man — just one woman in all world make goodness to me — my Frank Sen and my nurse-lady," and she stroked

with reverent little fingers the white hand resting on the bed beside her.

"What was he like, your Frank?" asked the nurse.

"Oh, he one big large American man — he not laugh many times loud, but he laugh in he blue eye. He got brown mustache and he hair all short, thick, wavy — like puppy dog's back. He poor — he not perform in circus, oh, no! He work for put up tents, for wagon, for horses. He ver good man for fight too — he smash man that hurt horse — he smash man that kick dog or push me, Japan baby. Oh, he best man in all the world" (the exquisite Madame Butterfly was not known yet, so Omassa was not quoting). "He tell me I shall not say some words, 'damn' and 'hell' and others more long, more bad, and he tell me all about that 'hell' and where is — and how you get in for steal, for lie, for hurt things not so big as you — and how you can't get out again where there is cool place for change — and

he smooth my hair and pat my shoulder, for he know Japan people don't ever be kissed — and he call me one word I cannot know."

She shook her head regretfully. "He call me 'poor little wave' — why poor little wave — wave that mean water?" she sighed. "I can't know why Frank Sen call me that."

But quick-witted Mrs. Holmes guessed the word had been "waif" — poor little waif, and she began dimly to comprehend the big-hearted, rough tent-man, who had tried to guard this little foreign maid from the ignorance and evil about her.

"But," resumed Omassa, with perfect conviction, "Frank Sen meaned goodness for me when he called me 'wave' — I know *that*. What you think that big American man do for help me little Japan baby — with no sense? Well, I will tell you. When daylight circus-show over, he take me by hand and lead me to shady place between tents — he sit down — put me at he knee,

and in what you call primer-book with he long brown finger he point out and make me know all those big fat letters — yes, he do *that.* Other mens make of him fun — and he only laugh; but when they say he my father and say of me names, he lay down primer and fight. When he lay out the whole deck, he come back and wash he hands and show me some more letters. Oh, I very stupid Japan baby; but at last I know *all,* and *then* he harness some together and make d-o-g say dog, and n-o say no, and so it come that one day next week was going to be his fête-day, — what you call birsday, — and I make very big large secret."

She lifted herself excitedly in bed, her glowing eyes were on her nurse's face, her lips trembled, the "lantern" was alight and glowing radiantly.

"What you think I do for my Frank Sen's birsday? I have never one penny, — I cannot buy, — but I make one big great try. I go to circus-lady, that ride horse and jump

hoops — she read like Frank Sen. I ask her show me some right letters. Oh, I work hard — for I am very stupid Japan child; but when that day come, Frank Sen he lead me to shady place — he open primer — then," her whole face was quivering with fun at the recollection, "then I take he long finger off — I put *my* finger and I slow spell — not cat — not dog — oh, *what* you think? — I spell F-r-a-n-k — Frank! He look to me, and then he make a big jump — he catch me — toss me, high up in air, and he shout big glad shout, and then I say — 'cause for your birsday.' He stop, he put me down, and he eyes come wet, and he take my hand and he say: 'Thank you, that's the only birsday gift I ever *re*ceived that was not from my mother. Spell it again for me,' he said; and then he was very proud and said, 'there was not any-other birsday gift like that in all the world!' What you think of *that?*

"Then the end to season of circus come

— Frank Sen he kneel down by me — he very sad — he say, 'I have nothing to give — I am such a fool — and the green-cloth — oh, the curse of the green-cloth!' He took off my Japan slippers and smiled at them and said, 'Poor little feet'; he stroked my hands and said, 'Poor little hands'; he lifted up my face and said, 'Poor little wave'; then he look up in air and he say, very troubled-like, 'A few home memories — some small knowledge, all I had, I have given her. To read a little is not much, but maybe it may help her some day, and I have nothing more to give!'

"And I feeling something grow very fast, here and here" (touching throat and breast), "and I say, '*You* have nothing to give me? well' — and then I forget all about I am little Japan girl, and I cry, 'Well, *I* have something to give you, Frank Sen, and that is one kiss!' And I put my arms about he neck and make one big large kiss right on he kind lips."

Her chin sank upon her night-robed breast. After a moment she smiled deprecatingly at Mrs. Holmes and whispered: "You forgive me, other day? You see I Japan girl — and just once I give big American kiss to my friend, Frank Sen."



CHAPTER XXI

STAGE FORFEITS AND THEIR HUMOUR

IT was during the rehearsals of "L'Article 47" that I enjoyed one single hearty laugh, — a statement that goes far to show my distressed state of mind, — for generally speaking that is an unusual day which does not bring along with its worry, work, and pain some bubble of healing laughter. It was a joke of Mr. Le Moyne's own special brand that found favour in my eyes and a place in my memory. Any one who has ever served under Mr. Daly can recall the astounding list of rules printed in fine type all over the backs of his contracts. The rules touching on *forfeits* seemed end-

less: "For being late," "For a stage wait," "For lack of courtesy," "For gossiping," "For wounding a companion's feelings"—each had its separate forfeiture. "For addressing the manager on business outside of his office," I remember, was considered worth one dollar for a first offence and more for a second. Most of these rules ended with, "Or discharge at the option of the manager." But it was well known that the mortal offence was the breaking that rule whose very first forfeit was five dollars, "Or discharge at the option of," etc., that rule forbidding the giving to outsiders of any stage information whatever; touching the plays in rehearsal, their names, scenes, length, strength, or story; and to all these many rules on the backs of our contracts we assented and subscribed our amused or amazed selves.

When the new French play "L'Article 47" was announced, the title aroused any amount of curiosity. A reporter after a matinee one

day followed me up the avenue, trying hard to get me to explain its meaning; but I was anxious not to be "discharged at the option of the manager," and declined to explain. Many of the company received notes asking the meaning of the title. At Mr. Le Moyne's house there boarded a walking interrogation-point of a woman. She wished to know what "L'Article 47" meant; she would know. She tried Mr. Harkins; Mr. Harkins said he didn't know. She tossed her head and tried Mr. Crisp; Mr. Crisp patiently and elaborately explained just why he could not give any information. She implied that he did not know a lady when he saw one, and fell upon Mr. Le Moyne, tired, hungry, suavely sardonic. "*He* was," she assured him, "a gentleman of the old school. *He* would know how to receive a lady's request and honour it." And Le Moyne rose to the occasion. A large benevolence sat upon his brow, as assuring her that, though he ran the risk of discharge for her fair sake, yet

should she have her will. He asked if she had ever seen a Daly contract. The bridling, simpering idiot replied, "She had seen several, and such numbers of silly rules she had never seen before, and—"

"That's it," blandly broke in Le Moyne, "there's the explanation of the whole thing—see? 'L'Article 47' is a five-act dramatization of the 47th rule of Daly's contract."

"Did you ever?" gasped the woman.

"No," said Le Moyne, reaching for bread, "I never did; but Daly's up to anything, and he'd discharge me like a shot if he should ever hear of this."

It was almost impossible to get Mr. Daly to laugh at an actor's joke; he was too generally at war with them, and he was too often the object of the jest. But he did laugh once at one of the solemn frauds perpetrated on me by this same Le Moyne.

On the one hundred and twenty-fifth performance of "Divorce" I had "stuck dead," as the saying is. Not a word

could I find of my speech. I was cold — hot — cold again. I clutched Mrs. Gilbert's hand. I whispered frantically: "What is it? Oh! what is the word?" But horror on horror, in my fall I had dragged her down with me. She, too, was bewildered — lost. "I don't know," she murmured. There we were, all at sea. After an awful wait I walked over and asked Captain Lynde (Louis James) to come on, and the scene continued from that point. I was angry — shamed. I had never stuck in all my life before, not even in my little girl days. Mr. Daly was, of course, in front. He came rushing back to inquire, to scold. Every one joked me about my probable five-dollar forfeit. Well, next night came, and at that exact line I did it again. Of course that was an expression of worn-out nerves; but it was humiliating in the extreme. Mr. Daly, it happened, was attending an opening elsewhere, and did not witness my second fall from grace. Then came Le Moyne to



W. J. Lemoyne

me — big and grave and kind, his plump face with the shiny spots on the cheek-bones fairly exuding sympathetic commiseration. He led me aside, he lowered his voice, he addressed me gently : —

"You stuck again, didn't you, Clara? Too bad! too bad! and of course you apprehend trouble with Daly? I'm awfully sorry. Ten dollars is such a haul on one week's salary. But see here, I've got an idea that will help you out, if you care to listen to it."

I looked hard at him, but the wretch had a front of brass; his benevolence was touching. I said eagerly: "Yes, I do care indeed to listen. What is the idea?"

He beamed with affectionate interest, as he said impressively, "Well, now you know that a bad 'stick' generally costs five dollars in this theatre?"

"Yes," I groaned.

"And you stuck awfully last night?"

"Yes," I admitted.

"Then to-night you go and repeat the

offence. But here is where I see hope for you. Daly is not here; he does not know yet what you have done. Watch then for his coming. This play is so long he will be here before it's over. Go to his private office at once. Get ahead of every one else; do you understand? Approach him affably and frankly. Tell him yourself that you have unfortunately stuck again, and then offer him *the two 'sticks' for eight dollars.* If he's a gentleman and not a Jew, he'll accept your proposal."

Just what remarks I made to my sympathetic friend Le Moyne at the end of that speech I cannot now recall. If any one else can, I can only say I was not a church member then, and let it pass at that. But when I opened my envelope next salary day and saw my full week's earnings there, I went to Mr. Daly's office and told him of my two "sticks" and of Le Moyne's proposed offer, and for once he laughed at an actor's joke.



POOR SEMANTHA

IT has happened to every one of us, I don't know why, but every mother's son or daughter of us can look back to the time when we habitually referred to some acquaintance or friend as "poor So-and-So"; and the curious part of it is that if one pauses to consider the why or wherefore of such naming, one is almost sure to find that, financially at least, "poor So-and-So" is better off than the person who is doing the "pooring." Nor is "poor So-and-So" always sick or sorrowful, stupid or ugly; and yet, low be it whispered, is there not always a trace of contempt in that word

"poor" when applied to an acquaintance? A very slight trace, of course, — we lightly rub the dish with garlic, we do not slice it into our salad. So when we call a friend "poor So-and-So," consciously or unconsciously, there is beneath all our affection the slight garlic touch of contemptuous pity; how else could I, right to her merry, laughing face, have called this girl poor Semantha?

I had at first no cause to notice her especially; she was poor, so was I; she was in the ballet, so was I. True, I had already had heads nodded sagely in my direction, and had heard voices solemnly murmur, "That girl's going to do something yet," and all because I had gone on alone and spoken a few lines loudly and clearly, and had gone off again, without leaving the audience impressed with the idea that they had witnessed the last agonized and dying breath of a girl killed by fright. I had that much advantage, but we both drew the same amount of salary per week, — five very torn and very dirty one-

dollar bills. Of course there could have been no rule nor reason for it, but it had so happened that all the young women of the ballet — there were four — received their salary in one-dollar bills. However, I was saying that we, the ballet, dressed together at that time, and poor Semantha first attracted my attention by her almost too great willingness to use my toilet soap, instead of the common brown washing soap she had brought with her. At some past time this soap must have been of the shape and size of a building brick, but now it resembled a small dumb-bell, so worn was its middle, so nobby its ends. Then, too, my pins were, to all intents and purposes, her pins; my hair-pins her hair-pins; while worst of all, my precious, real-for-true French rouge was *her* rouge.

At that point I came near speaking, because poor Semantha was not artistic in her make-up, and she painted not only her cheeks but her eyes, her temples, her jaws, and quite a good sample of each side

of her neck. But just as I would be about to speak, I would bethink me of those nights when, in the interest of art, I had to be hooked up behind, and I would hold my peace.

On the artistic occasions alluded to, I hooked Semantha up the back, and then Semantha hooked up my back. Ah, what a comfort was that girl; as a hooker-up of waists she was perfection. No taking hold of the two sides of the waist, planting the feet firmly, and taking a huge breath, as if the Vendôme column was about to be overthrown. No hooking of two-thirds of the hooks and eyes, and then suddenly unhooking them, remarking that there was a little mistake at the top hook. No putting of thumbs to the mouth to relieve the awful numbness caused by terrible effort and pinching. Ah, no! Semantha smiled, — she generally did that, — turned you swiftly to the light, caught your inside belt on the fly, as it were, fastened that, fluttered to

the top, exactly matched the top hook to the top eye, and, high presto! a little pull at the bottom, a swift smooth down beneath the arms, and you were finished, and you knew your back was a joy until the act was over.

That was all I had known of Semantha. Probably it was all I ever should have known had not a sharp attack of sickness kept me away from the theatre for a time, during which absence Semantha made the discovery which was to bring her nearer to me.

Finding my dressing place but a barren waste of pine board, Semantha with smiling readiness turned to the dressing place on her left for a pin or two, and was stricken with amazement when the milder of her two companions remarked in a grudgingly unwilling tone, "You may take a few of my pins and hair-pins if you are sure to pay them back again."

While she was simply stunned for a mo-

ment, when the other companion, with that rare, straightforward brutality for which she became so deservedly infamous later on, snorted angrily: "No, you don't! Don't you touch anything of mine! You can't sponge on me as you do on Clara!"

Now Semantha was a German, as we were apt to find out if ever she grew excited over anything; and whenever she had a strange word used to her, she would repeat that word several times, first to make sure she fully understood its meaning, next to impress it upon her memory; so there she stood staring at her dressing mate, and slowly, questioningly repeated, "Spoonge? spoonge? w'at is that spoonge?" And received for answer, "*What is* it? why, it's stealing." Semantha gave a cry. "Yes," continued the straightforward one, "it's stealing without secrecy; that's what sponging is."

Poor Semantha — astonished, insulted, frightened — turned her quivering face to the other girl and passionately cried, "Und she,

my Fräulein Clara, tink she dat I steal of her?"

Then for the first time, and I honestly believe the last time in her life, that other pretty blond, but woolly-brained, young woman rose to the occasion — God bless her — and answered stoutly, "No, Clara never thought you were stealing."

So it happened that when I returned to work, and Semantha's excited and very German welcome had been given, I noticed a change in her. When my eyes met hers, instead of smiling instantly and broadly at me, her eyes sank to the ground and her face flushed painfully. At last we were left alone for a few moments. Quick as a flash, Semantha shut the door and bolted it with the scissors. Then she faced me; but what a strange, new Semantha it was! Her head was down, her eyes were down, her very body seemed to droop. Never had I seen a human look so like a beaten dog. She came quite close, both hands hanging heavily at



her sides, and in a low, hurried tone she began: "Clara, now Clara, now see, I've been usen your soap — ach, it smells so goot! — nearly all der time!" — "Why," I broke in, "you were welcome!"

But she stopped me roughly with one word, "Wait," and then she went on. "Und der pins — why, I can't no more count. Und der hair-pins, und der paint," (her voice was rising now), "oh, der lofely soft pink paint! und I used dem, I used 'em all. Und I never t'ought you had to pay for dem all. You see, I be so green, fräulein, I dun know no manners, und I did, I did use dem, I know I did; but, so help me, I didn't mean to spoonge, und by Gott I didn't shteal!"

I caught her hands, they were wildly beating at the air then, and said, "I know it, Semantha, my poor Semantha, I know it."

She looked me brightly in the eyes and answered: "You do? you *truly* know dat?" gave a great sigh, and added with a

fervour I fear I ill-appreciated, "Oh, I hope you vill go to heaven!" then quickly qualified it, "dat is, dat I don't mean right avay, dis minute — only ven you can't keep avay any longer!"

Then she sprang to her dress hanging on the hook, and after struggling among the roots of her pocket, found the opening, and with triumph breathing from every feature of her face, she brought forth a small white cube, and cried out, "Youst you look at dat!"

I did; it seemed of a stony structure, white with a chill thin line of pink wandering forlornly through or on it (I am sure nothing could go through it); but the worst thing about it was the strange and evil smell emanating from it. And this evil, white, hard thing had been purchased from a pedler under the name of soap, fine shaving or toilet soap, and now Semantha was delightedly offering it to me, to use every night, and I with immense fervour prom-

ised I would use it, just as soon as my own was gone; and I mentally registered a solemn vow that the shadow of my soap should never grow less.

I soon discovered that poor Semantha was very ambitious; yes, in spite of her faint German accent and the amusing abundance of negatives in her conversation, she was ambitious. One night we had been called on to "go on" as peasants and sing a chorus and do a country dance, and poor Semantha had sung so freely and danced so gracefully and gayly, that it was a pleasure to look at her. She was such a contrast to the two others. One had sung in a thin nasal tone, and the expression of her face was enough to take all the dance out of one's feet. With frowning brows and thin lips tightly compressed, she attacked the figures with such fell determination to do them right or die, that one could hardly help hoping she *would* make a mistake and take the consequences. The other, — the woolly-

brained young person, — having absolutely no ear for music or time, silently but vigorously worked her jaws through the chorus, and affably ambled about, under everybody's feet, through the dance, displaying all the stiff-kneed grace of a young, well-meaning calf.

When we were in our room, I told Semantha how well she had sung and danced, and her face was radiant with delight. Then becoming very grave, she said: "Oh, fräulein, how I vant to be an actor! Not a common vun, but —" and she laid her hand with a childish gesture on her breast — "I vant to be a big actor. Don' you tink I can ever be vun — eh?"

And looking into those bright, intelligent, squirrel-like eyes, I answered, "I think it is very likely." Poor Semantha! we were to recall those simple remarks, later on.

Christmas being near, I was very busy working between acts upon something intended for a present to my mother. This

work was greatly admired by all the girls; but never shall I forget the astonishment of poor Semantha when she learned for whom it was intended.

"Your mutter lets you love her yet — you would dare?" And as I only gazed dumbly at her, she went on, while slow tears gathered in her eyes, "My mutter hasn't let me love her since — since I vas big enough to be knocked over."

Through the talkativeness of an extra night-hand or scene-shifter, who knew her family, I learned something of poor Semantha's private life. Poor child! from the very first she had rested her bright brown eyes upon the wrong side of life, — the seamy side, — and her own personal share of the rough patchwork, composed of dismal drabs and sodden browns and greens, had in it just one small patch of rich and brilliant colour, — the theatre. Of the pure tints of sky and field and watery waste and fruit and flower, she knew nothing. But what of that!

had she not secured this bit of rosy radiance, and might it not in time be added to, until it should incarnadine the whole fabric of her life?

Semantha's father was dead; her mother was living — worse luck. For had she been but a memory, Semantha would have been free to love and reverence that memory, and it might have been as a very strong staff to support her timid steps in rough and dangerous places. But alas! she lived and was no staff to lean upon; but was, instead, an ever present rod of punishment. She was a harmful woman, a destroyer of young tempers, a hardener of young hearts. Many a woman of quick, short temper has a kind heart; while even the sullenly sulky woman generally has a few rich, sweet drops of the milk of human kindness, which she is willing to bestow upon her own immediate belongings. But Semantha's mother was not of these. How, one might ask, had this wretch obtained two good husbands? Yes, Semantha had a stepfather,

and the only excuse for the suicidal marriage act as performed by these two victims was that the woman was well enough to look upon — a trim, bright-eyed, brown creature with the mark of the beast well hidden from view.

When Semantha, who was her first born, too, came home with gifts and money in her hands, her mother received her with frowning brows and sullen, silent lips. When the child came home with empty hands, and gave only cheerfully performed hard manual labour, she was received with fierce eyes, cruel rankling words, and many a cut and heavy blow, and was often thrust from the house itself, because 'twas known the girl was afraid of darkness.

Her stepfather then would secretly let her in, though sometimes she dared go no farther than the shed, and there she would sit the whole night through, in all the helpless agony of fright. But all this was as nothing compared to the cruelty she had yet to mete



Clara Morris before coming to Daly's Theatre in 1870

out to poor Semantha, whose greatest fault seemed to be her intense longing for some one to love. Her mother *would not* be loved, her own father had wisely given the whole thing up, her step-father *dared* not be loved. So, when the second family began to materialize, Semantha's joy knew no bounds. What a welcome she gave each newcomer! How she worked and walked and cooed and sang and made herself an humble bond-maiden before them. And they loved her and cried for her, and bit hard upon her needle-stabbed forefinger with their first wee, white, triumphant teeth, and for just a little, little time poor Semantha was not poor, but very rich indeed. And that strange creature, who had brought them all into the world, looked on and saw the love and smiled a nasty smile; and Semantha saw the smile, and her heart quaked, as well it might. For so soon as these little men could stand firmly on their sturdy German legs, their gentle mother taught them, deliberately taught them,

to call their sister names, the meaning being as naught to them, but enough to break a sister's heart. To jeer at and disobey her, so that they became a pair of burly little monsters, who laughed loud, affected laughter at the word "love," and swore with many long-syllabled German oaths that they would kick with their copper-toes any one who tried to kiss them. Ah! when you find a fiercely violent temper allied to a stone-cold heart, offer you up an earnest prayer to Him for the safety of the souls coming under the dominion and the power of that woman.

I recall one action of Semantha's that goes far, I think, to prove what a brave and loyal heart the untaught German girl possessed. She was very sensitive to ridicule, and when people made fun of her, though she would laugh good-humouredly, many times she had to keep her eyes down to hide the brimming tears. Now her stepfather's name was a funny one to American ears, and always provoked a laugh, while her own

family name was not funny. Yet because the man had shown her a little timid kindness, she faithfully bore his name, and through storms of jeering laughter, clear to the dismal end, she called herself Semantha Wäacker.

Once we spoke of it, and she exclaimed in her excited way: "Yes, I am alvays Wäacker. Why not, ven he is so goot? Why — why, dat man, dat vater Wäacker, he have kissed me two time already. Vunce here" (placing her finger on a vicious scar upon her cheek), "ven de mutter cut me bad, und vun odder time, ven I come very sick. Und de mutter seen him in de glass, und first she break dat glass, und den she stand and smile a little, und for days und days, when somebody be about, my mutter put out de lips und make sounds like kisses, so as to shame de vater before everybody. Oh, yes, let 'em laugh; he kiss me, und I stay Semantha Wäacker."

The unfortunate man's occupation was also

something that provoked laughter, when one first heard of it; but as Semantha herself was my informant, and I had grown to care for her, I managed by a great effort to keep my face serious. How deeply this fact impressed her, I was to learn later on.

Christmas had come, and I was in high glee. I had many gifts, simple and inexpensive most of them, but they were perfectly satisfactory to me. My dressing-room mates had remembered me, too, in the most characteristic fashion. The pretty, woolly-brained girl had with smiling satisfaction presented me with a curious structure of perforated cardboard and gilt paper, intended to catch flies. Its fragility may be imagined from the fact that it broke twice before I got it back into its box; still there was, I am sure, not another girl in Cleveland who could have found for sale a fly-trap at Christmas time.

The straightforward one had presented me with an expensively repellent gift in the form

of a brown earthenware jug, a cross between a Mexican idol and a pitcher. A hideous thing, calculated to frighten children or sober drunken men. I know I should have nearly died of thirst before I could have forced myself to swallow a drop of liquid coming from that horrible interior.

Semantha was nervous and silent, and the performance was well on before she caught me alone, out in a dark passageway. Then she began as she always did when excited, with: "Clara, now Clara, you know I told my vater of you, for dat you were goot to me, und he say, vat he alvays say — not'ing. Dat day I come tell you vat his work vas, I vent home und I say, 'Vater Wäacker, I told my fräulein you made your livin' in de tombstone yard,' und he say, quvick like, 'Vell,' — you know my vater no speak ver goot English" (Semantha's own English was weakening fast), — "'vell, I s'pose she make some big fool laugh, den, like everybodies, eh?' Und I say, 'No, she don't laugh! de lips

curdle a little' " (curdle was Semantha's own word for tremble or quiver. If she shivered even with cold, she curdled with cold), "'but she don't laugh, und she say, "It vas the best trade in de vorldt for you, 'cause it must be satisfactions to you to work all day long on somebody's tombstone."' "

"Oh, Semantha!" I cried, "why did you tell him that?"

"But vy not?" asked the girl, innocently. "Und he look at me hard, und his mouth curdle, und den he trow back his head und he laugh, pig laughs, und stamp de feet und say over und over, 'Mein Gott! mein Gott! satisfackshuns ter vurk on somebody's tombstones — *some*body's. Und she don't laugh at my vurk, nieder, eh? Vell, vell! dat fräulein she tinks sometings! Say, Semantha, don't it dat you like a Kriss-Kringle present to make to her, eh?' Und I say, dat very week, dere have to be new shoes for all de kinder, und not vun penny vill be left. Und he shlap me my back,

und say, 'Never mindt, I'll make him,' und so he did, und here it is," thrusting some small object into my hand. "Und if you laugh, fräulein, I tink I die, 'cause it is so mean und little."

Then stooping her head, she pressed a kiss on my bare shoulder and rushed headlong down the stairs, leaving me standing there in the dark with "it" in my hand. Poor Semantha! "it" lies here now, after all these years; but where are you, Semantha? Are you still dragging heavily through life, or have you reached that happy shore, where hearts are hungry never more, but filled with love divine?

"It" is a little bit of white marble, highly polished and perfectly carved to imitate a tiny Bible. A pretty toy it is to other eyes; but to mine it is infinitely pathetic, and goes well with another toy in my possession, a far older one, which cost a human life.

Well, from that Christmas-tide Semantha

was never quite herself again. For a time she was extravagantly gay, laughing at everything or nothing. Then she became curiously absent-minded. She would stop sometimes in the midst of what she might be doing, and stand stock-still, with fixed eyes, and thoughts evidently far enough away from her immediate surroundings. Sometimes she left unfinished the remark she might be making. Once I saw a big, hulking-looking fellow walking away from the theatre door with her. The night was bad, too, but I noticed that she carried her own bundle, while he slouched along with his hands in his pocket, and I felt hurt and offended for her.

And then one night Semantha was late, and we wondered greatly, since she usually came very early, the theatre being the one bright spot in life to her. We were quite dressed, and were saying how lucky it was there was no dance to-night, or it would be spoiled, when she came in. Her face was

dreadful; even the straightforward one exclaimed in a shocked tone, "You must be awful sick!"

But Semantha turned her hot, dry-looking eyes upon her and answered slowly and dully, "I'm not sick."

"Not sick, with that white face and those poor curdling hands?"

"I'm not sick, I'm going avay."

Just then the act was called, and down the stairs we had to dash to take our places. We wore pages' dresses, and as we went Semantha stood in the doorway in her shabby street gown and followed us with wistful eyes — she did so love a page's costume.

When we were "off" we hastened back to our dressing room. Semantha was still there. She moved stiffly about, packing together her few belongings; but her manner silenced us. She had taken everything else, when her eyes fell upon a remnant of that evil-smelling soap. She paused a bit,

then in that same slow way she said, "You never, never used that soap after all, Clara?" and when I answered: "Oh, yes, I have. I've used it several times," she put her hand out quickly, and took the thing, and slipped it into her pocket, and then she stood a moment and looked about; and if ever anguish grew in human eyes, it slowly grew in hers. Her face was pale before; it was white now.

At last her eyes met mine, then a sudden tremor crossed her face from brow to chin, a piteous slow smile crept around her lips, and in that dull and hopeless tone she said, "You see, my fräulein, I'll never be a big actor after all," and turned her back upon me, and slowly left the room and the theatre, without one kiss or handshake, even from me. And I, who knew her, did not guess why. She went out of my life forever, stepping down to that lower world of which I had only heard, but by God's mercy did not know.

That same sad night a group of men, close-guarded, travelled to Columbus, that city of great prisons and asylums, and one of those guarded men was poor Semantha's lover, alas! her convicted lover now; and she, having cast from her her proudest hope, her high ambition, trusting a little in his innocence, trusting entirely in his love, now followed him steadily to the prison's very gate.

After this came a long silence. One girl had fallen from our ranks, but what of that? Another girl had taken her place. We were still four, marching on, — eyes front, step firm and regular, — ready when the quick order came quickly to obey. There could be no halt, no turning back to the help of the figure already growing dim, of one who had fallen by the wayside.

After a time rumours came to us, at first faint and vague — uncertain, then more distinct — more dreadful! And the stronger the rumours grew, the lower were the voices

with which we discussed them; since we were young, and vice was strange to us, and we were being forced to believe that she who had so recently been our companion was now — was — well, to be brief, she wore her rouge in daylight now upon the public street.

Poor, poor Semantha! They were playing "Hamlet," the night of the worst and strongest rumour, and as I heard Ophelia assuring one of her noble friends or relatives: —

"You may wear your rue with a difference,"

I could not help saying to myself that "rue" was not the only thing that could be so treated, since we all had rouge upon our cheeks; yet Semantha — ah, God forgive her — wore her rouge with a difference.

A little longer and we were all in Columbus, where a portion of each season was passed, our manager keeping his company there during the sitting of the legislature.

We had secured boarding-houses, — the memory of mine will never die, — and in fact our round bodies were beginning to fit themselves to the square holes they were expected to fill for the next few weeks, when we found ourselves sneezing and coughing our way through that spirit-crushing thing they call a "February thaw." Rehearsal had been long, and I was tired. I had quite a distance to walk, and my mind was full of professional woe. Here was I, a ballet girl who had taken a cold whose proportions simply towered over that nursed by the leading lady's self; and as I slipped and slid slushily homeward, I asked myself angrily what a fairy was to do with a handkerchief, — and in heaven's name, what was that fairy to do without one. The dresses worn by fairies — theatrical, of course — in those days would seem something like a fairy mother-hubbard now, at all events a home toilet of some sort, so very proper were they; but even so there was no provision made for handkerchiefs, no

thought apparently that stage fairies might have colds in their star-crowned heads.

So as my wet skirt viciously slapped my icy ankles, I almost tearfully declared to myself I would have to have a handkerchief, even though it were pinned to my wings, only who on earth could get it off in time for me to use? Now if poor Semantha were only — and there I stopped, my eyes, my mind, fixed upon a woman a little way ahead of me, who stood staring in a window. Her figure drooped as though she were weary or very, very sad, and I said to myself, "I don't know what you are looking at, but I *do* know it's something you want awfully," and just then she turned and faced me. My heart gave a plunge against my side. I knew her. One woman's glance, lightning-quick, mathematically true, and I had her photograph — the last, the very last I ever took of poor Semantha.

As her eyes met mine, they opened wide and bright. The rosy colour flushed into her

face, her lips smiled. She gave a little forward movement, then before I had completed calling out her name, like a flash she changed, her brows were knit, her lips close-pressed, and all her face, save for the shameful red sign on her cheeks, was very white. I stood quite still — not so, she. She walked stiffly by, till on the very line with me she shot out one swift, sidelong glance and slightly shook her head; yet as she passed I clearly heard that grievous sound that coming from a woman's throat tells of a swallowed sob.

Still I stood watching her as she moved away, regardless quite of watery pool or deepest mud; she marched straight on and at the first corner disappeared, but never turned her head. As she had left me first without good-by, so she met me now without a greeting, and passed me by without farewell. And I, who knew her, understood at last the reason why. Poor wounded, loyal heart, who would deny herself a longed-for

pleasure rather than put the tiniest touch of shame upon so small a person as a ballet girl whom one year ago she had so lovingly called friend.

At last I turned to go. As I came to the window into which Semantha had so lovingly been gazing, I looked in too, and saw a window full of fine, thick underwear for men.

Two crowded, busy years swept swiftly by before I heard once more, and for the last time, of poor Semantha. I was again in Columbus for a short time, and was boarding at the home of one of the prison wardens. Whenever I could catch this man at home, I took pains to make him talk, and he told me many interesting tales. They were scarcely of a nature to be repeated to young children after they had gone to bed, that is, if you wanted the children to stay in bed; but they were interesting, and one day the talk was of odd names, — his own was funny, — and at last he mentioned Semantha's. Of course I

was alert, of course I questioned him — how often I have wished I had not. For the tale he told was sad. Nothing new, nay, it was common even; but so is "battle, murder, and sudden death," from which, nevertheless, we pray each day to be delivered. Ah! his tale was sad if common.

It seemed that when Semantha followed that treacherous young brute, her convicted lover, she had at first obtained a situation as a servant, so she could not come to the prison every visiting day, and what was worse in his eyes, she was most poorly paid, and had but very small sums to spend upon extras for him. He grumbled loudly, and she was torn with loving pity. Then quite suddenly she was stricken down with sickness, and her precious brute had to do without her visits for a time and the small comforts she provided for him, until one visiting day he fairly broke down and roared with rage and grief over the absence of his tobacco.

The hospital sheltered Semantha as long as the rules permitted, but when she left it she was weak and worn and homeless, and as she crept slowly from place to place, a woman old and well-dressed spoke to her, calling her Mamie Someone, and then apologized for her mistake. Next she asked a question or two, and ended by telling Semantha she was the very girl she wanted — to come with her. She could rest for a few days at her home, and after that she should have steady employment and better pay, and — oh! did I not tell you it was a common tale?

But when on visiting day the child with frightened eyes told what she had discovered about her new home, the soulless monster bade her stay there, and every dollar made in her new accursed trade was lavished upon him.

By a little sickness and a great deal of fraud the wretch got himself into the prison hospital for a time, and there my informant

arned to know the pair quite well. She
ot only loved him passionately, but she had
r all his faults of selfishness and general
gliness the tender patience of a mother.
nd he traded upon her loving pity by pre-
nding he could obtain the privilege of this
immunity from that if he had only so
any dollars to give to the guard or keeper.
nd she, poor loving fool, hastened a few
eps farther down the road of shame to ob-
in for him the money, receiving in return
erhaps a rough caress or two that brought
ie sunshine to her heart and joy into her
yes.

His term of imprisonment was nearly over,
nd Semantha was preparing for his coming
reedom. His demands seemed unending.
His hat would be old-fashioned, and his boots
nd his undergarments were old, etc. Then
e wanted her to have two tickets for Belle-
ontaine ready, that they might leave Colum-
us at once, and Semantha was excited and
orried. "One day," said the warden, "she

asked to see me for a moment, and I exclaimed at sight of her, 'What is it that's happened?'

"Her face was fairly radiant with joy, and she shook all over. It seemed as though she could not speak at first, and then she burst forth, 'Mr. S——, now Mr. S——, you don't much like my poor boy, but joust tink now how goot he is! Ach, Gott, he tells me ven all der tings are got, und de tickets too, have I some money left I shall buy a ring, und then,' — she clutched my arm with both her hands, and dropped her head forward on them, as she continued in a stifled voice, — 'und then we go to a minister and straight we get married.'

"And," continued Mr. S——, "as I looked at her I caught myself wishing she were dead, that she might escape the misery awaiting her.

"At last the day came. Her lover and a pal of his went out together. Faithful Semantha was awaiting him, and was not

pleased at the pal's presence, and was more distressed still when her lover refused to go to the shelter she had prepared for him, in which he was to don his new finery, but insisted upon going with his friend. Semantha yielded, of course, and on the way her lover laughed and jested — asked for the tickets, then the ring, and putting on the latter declared that he was married to *her* now, and would wear the ring until they saw the 'Bible-sharp,' and then she should be married to *him*; and Semantha brightened up again and was happy.

"They came at last to the house they sought. It was a low kind of neighbourhood, had a deserted look, and was next door to a saloon. The pal said there were no women in the house, and Semantha had better not come in. The lover bade her wait, and they went in and closed the door, and left the girl outside. There she waited such a weary time, then at last she rang — quite timidly at first, then louder, faster, too, and a scowling fellow from

the saloon told her that the house was empty. She rang wildly then, until he threatened a policeman. Then she ceased, but walked round to the back and found its rear connected with a stable yard. She came back again, dazed and white, her hand pressed to her heart, and as she stood there a lad who hung about the prison grounds a good deal, did odd jobs or held a horse now and then, and who knew Semantha well, came along and cried out, 'I say, why didn't you go with yer feller and his pal?'

"'She didn't say nary a word,' said the boy, 'she didn't say nary a word, but pushed her head out and looked at me till her eyes glared same as a cat's, and I says: "Why, I seed 'em ketch the 4.30 train to Bellefontaine! They had to run and jump to do it, but they didn't scare a darn, they just laughed and laughed." And, Boss, something like a tremble, but most like my dog when I beats him, and I have the stick up to hit him again, and not a word did she say, but just stood as still

as still after that doglike tremble went away. I got muddled, and at last I says, "Semantha, hav' yer got no sponds?" She didn't seem to see me no more, nor hear me, and I goes on louder like, "Say, Semantha! where yer goin' to? what yer goin' ter do now?" and, Boss, she done the toughest thing I ever seen. She jes' slowly lifted up her hands and looked at 'em, looked good and long, like they were strange to her, and then jes' as slow she turns 'em over, they were bare and empty, and the palms was up, and she spreads the fingers wide apart and moves 'em a bit, and then without raisin' up her eyes, she jes' smiles a little slow, slow smile.

"'And then she turned 'round and walked away without nary a word at all; but, Boss, her shoulders sagged down, and her head kind of trembled, and she dragged her feet along jes' like an old, old woman, what was too tired to live. I was skeered like, and thought I'd come here and tell you, but I looked back to watch her. 'Twas almost dark then, and

when she came to the crossin', the wind was blowin' so she could hardly stand, but she stopped awhile and looked down one street, then she looked down the other street, and then she lifts up her face right to the sky the longest time of all, and so I looks up ter see was ther' anything there; but ther' wasn't nothin' but them dirty, low-hangin' clouds as looks so rainy and so lonesome. And then right of a suddent she gives a scream; but no, not a scream, a groan and a scream together. It made my blood turn cold, I tell yer; and she trows both her empty hands out from her, and says as plain as I do now, Boss, "My God, it is too much! I cannot, cannot bear it!" Then she draw'd herself up quite tall, shut her hands tight before her, and walked as fast as feet could carry her straight toward the river.'"

And that was the last that he, my friend, had ever heard of poor Semantha. I tried to dry my falling tears, but he dried them more effectually by remarking:—

"Yes, she was a bright, promising, true-hearted girl; but you see she went wrong, and the sinner has to pay both here and hereafter."

"Don't," I hotly cried. "Don't go on! don't! Sin? sin? Don't hurl that word at her, the embodiment of self-sacrifice! Sin? where there is no law, there can be no sin. And who had taught her anything? She was a heathen. So far as one person can be the cause of another person's wrong-doing, so far was Semantha's mother the guilty cause of Semantha's loving fall. She was a heathen. She had been taught just one law — that she was always to serve other people. That law she truly kept unto the end. Of that great book, the Bible, closely packed with all sustaining promises, she knew naught. I tell you the only Bible she ever held within her hand was that mimic one of marble her father carved for me. She was a heathen. Of that all-enduring One — 'chief among ten thousand and altogether lovely,' for whom

there was no thing too small to love, no sin too great to pardon — she knew nothing. Even that woman who with wide-open, lustrous eyes had boldly broken every law human and divine, yet was forgiven her uncounted sins, because of her loving faith and true repentance, Semantha knew not of, nor of repentance nor its necessity, nor its power.

"Let her alone! I say, she was a heathen. But even so, God made her. God placed her; and if she fell by the wayside in ignorance, she *did not* fall from the knowledge of her Maker."